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THE

SORCERER OF THE MOUNTAIN.

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PASTOUREL:

OR, THE

SORCERER OF THE MOUNTAIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

FREDERICK SOULIE.

DUBLIN:

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THE

SORCERER OF THE MOUNTAIN.

CHAPTER I.

The narrative which we are about to lay before our readers commences in 1708, in one of the wildest portions of the county of Foix, which county, in the partition made during the revolution, comprises the district of Lavelanet. If our readers will accompany the three travellers who pursued a difficult path along the borders of a torrent, they will at the same time become acquainted with several of the actors in this story and with the scene of its principal events.

One of the three travellers was mounted upon a goodly and well caparisoned mule; the two others rode upon wretched nags which had no other recommendation than that of being able to advance with a step almost as sure as that of the mule, along a road marked out by the feet of men or animals alone.

The individual who bestrode the mule, and to whom we shall first direct the reader's attention, as he was of a rank superior to that of his companions, seemed to be about forty or forty-five years of age. He wore *braies* or wide breeches, tied above the knee, and stout, funnel-shaped boots. His doublet of black velvet had large flaps which covered his thighs; it was buttoned to his chin, showing glimpses of a white cravat *a rabat*, as worn in the cities, by the gentlemen of the robe, whether magistrates or advocates. His features bore the stamp of spirit, firmness and intelligence, although they could not exactly be called remarkable; his habits of thought were denoted more accurately by his glance, perhaps, than by any other characteristic; at times, it roamed with a sort of restless curiosity over every thing that met his eye, at times, it fastened itself suddenly upon some single object, as if unable to tear itself away. It is thus with the pointer when in quest of game; he darts onward, coming and re-

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turning, snuffing on all sides, following every trace, leaving and resuming them, ever agitated and restless, until the moment when he stops motionless before the prey which he has at last discovered.

Judging from this similitude, it might be said that the man of whom we speak, was at this moment in quest of something, for he passed neither bush, nor mound, nor tree, without scanning it with the utmost care. This man was the Sieur Barati, councillor of the parliament of Toulouse.

The one who followed him, (for the road being far too narrow to allow two to ride abreast, the three advanced one after the other,) was dressed entirely in black. He wore a wretched pair of spurs fastened to his high-heeled shoes, a precaution doubly useless; in the first place, because his steed was completely insensible to this kind of admonition; in the second, because the legs of the individual in question were so short, that he could only prick the sides of his saddle.

If to this sketch of the rider, we add, that from the fear of falling, he had spread himself, as it were into two parts, holding with one hand the mane of his pony, and with the other, the pummel of his saddle, the reader will have a tolerably correct idea of Langlois, clerk of the chamber of inquest and of the parliament of Toulouse. If we hesitate to compare him to an ape on horseback, it is because the first glance at his face would banish such an idea, if by chance it had entered the mind of a spectator. A narrow visage, a hooked nose of enormous size, thin and contracted lips, gave him rather the aspect of a bird of prey. His eyes, like those of the Sieur Barati, were perpetually in motion, but it was by no means the same motive which gave them this activity, for profound terror was stamped upon every feature of this man's face, and this terror was so intense, that his habitual paleness had assumed a hue almost livid and cadaverous.

The one who rode foremost evidently belonged to an entirely different class from that of his companions. He was a sturdy peasant of twenty-five years, clothed in a coarse garb of grey woollen stuff, and wearing a felt hat, from beneath the wide brim of which, escaped a profusion of black hair. He was of the middle height, and seemed of a strong and muscular frame. His face wore the characteristics of the Arab, and his brown coppery hue seemed to designate him as belonging to this race, or as a descendant from it. He advanced whistling, casting around an indolent glance, as if there were nothing new to discover in a country which he had traversed a hundred times before. Still, however, he did not seem entirely free from apprehension, for a pair of long pistols could be seen at his saddle bow, and beneath his left arm he carried a musket which he was unwilling doubtless to

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sling across his shoulder, that it might the sooner be in readiness, if an occasion offered which required its services.

For the rest, it was easy to see that he was capable of using it with courage and dexterity. Whether it were that some profound thought entirely absorbed him, or that he acted voluntarily and with intention, the kind of careless chirrup which he whistled, became by degrees more emphatic, and in a short time the shrill sounds were sufficiently distinct to be heard at a great distance.

At this moment the travellers were advancing toward two hills, which seemed to unite in an acute angle; this doubtless had formerly been the case, but the constant action of the waters had gradually separated them, leaving a free passage to the torrent, which bordered the path along which our travellers were advancing. The narrowness of this passage in which the torrent and the road shrunk, as it were, into closer boundaries, the one, running with a deep and headlong current, the other, contracting to a line of three feet in width, at most, together with the conformation of the mountains, had gained for this spot the name of the Tunnel. In truth, the dense forests of firs which covered the two heights, and hung over the passage, gave it, when viewed at a moderate distance, the appearance of an immense tunnel lying along the road.

The whistling of the foremost traveller seemed now to alarm one of those who followed him.

'Holla, master Galidou!' cried the clerk, 'it seems that the nearer we approach danger, the less your precaution. Do you wish to warn all the cut-throats of the neighbourhood that they might find here two honest men to butcher?'

'I am glad to see that you do not count yourself among the number, old ink-vender,' said Galidou. 'I will inform the cut-throats of it if they come, and they will spare you as being one of the trade.'

'Worthy councillor,' said Langlois, 'will you suffer this boor of a mountaineer to insult an officer of parliament on account of a remark, which, as you yourself must acknowledge, is perfectly just.'

'I acknowledge, in the first place, that your remark though just enough in its commencement, ended in a manner that I think very insolent, unless you attach to the number two, the same sense which master Gallidou has attributed to it; consequently I must insist on your being silent, and I would know from our guide why he whistles so loudly.'

'By my troth, worthy councillor,' replied the latter, taking his bridle between his teeth, and raising his musket to a level with his shoulder, as if about to discharge it, 'it is to see if it will not lure out a few *roquets*,* and it would not be bad to

* Shock dogs.

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prevent two or three of them from returning to their kennel up yonder.'

At these words the councillor suddenly reined in his mule, Langlois' horse, which followed with drooping head, came in contact with the beast, and started back so quickly, that the clerk uttered a cry of terror, as if he were about to be precipitated into the foaming torrent.

'Silence, sir!' said the councillor in a stern tone. 'That cry of itself is enough to arouse those who are interested in preventing our arrival.'

'No, worthy councillor,' said Galidou, pausing like the rest, 'the *roquets* will never think that a human being could utter such a cry. For my part, I never heard but one that resembled it, and that one was a cry of distress from an old fox, which a she bear was quietly disembowelling, for coming to play with her cubs. It was on this very spot.'

At these last words the clerk began to tremble in the saddle, and drew up his legs still higher than before.

'Mon dieu! mon dieu!' he exclaimed, is it lawful to send honest people to travel in such a country? Worthy councillor, since you find my observation just, permit me to make a second. What if we were to give up this journey?'

'How, sir?' said the councillor, sternly, 'the parliament has directed me to make a perquisition in this district, and I will perform my duty, whatever danger I may incur, whether from men or from wild beasts.'

The mountaineer gazed at the councillor, as if to assure himself that this courage existed in his heart, as well as in his words. Barati perceived it, and, as if offended by the scrutiny, added in a peremptory tone,

'That then is the baron's castle?'

This was the building toward which Galidou had pointed, in speaking of the kennel, to which he wished to prevent the *roquets* from returning, and it was the sight of this castle that had induced the councillor to check the progress of his mule.

Through the immense forest of fir-trees with which it was surrounded, they had caught an occasional glimpse of its highest turrets, without being able to judge, either of the strength or the extent of this feudal mansion, but at this spot, a vast opening disclosed it to its very base, and although they were unable to see the deep moat which surrounded it on all sides, the height of its walls rendered it evident that it was a fortress difficult to be taken by regular troops, and entirely impregnable to the bands of marauders who ravaged this portion of the country.

The councillor remained with his eyes fixed upon the castle, as if he would fain pierce its walls, and examine its

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interior, while Galidou, unable to conceal his emotion beneath an affected air of indifference, replied:

'Yes, worthy councillor, yonder is the porch where the Baron de la Roque roosts when he has done a deed of mischief, and it is there that he gives an asylum to all the robbers of the country, who engage to lend him aid when he claims their services.'

'It was to these, I suppose, that you referred a moment since, when you called them *roquets*?'

'Yes, yes,' replied Galidou, giving way to sudden fury, 'I call them *roquets*, and it is better than they deserve; it is an insult to a dog to call these fellows by that name. True *roquets* will turn and snap, but these brigands here, they know well enough how to aim a musket from behind a wall, but as soon as they find themselves face to face with a man, they run like a hare from a hound. I should like to meet three or four of them here to send them—'

The mountaineer did not complete his sentence in words, but two or three expressive gestures satisfied the councillor that Galidou would have felt no scruple in hurling them by one means or another into the depths of the torrent.

'It is the employment of force that leads to the abuse of force,' replied the councillor, with that severe and imperative tone which seemed habitual to him, 'it is not in this way that you will make good your cause before the parliament."

'To the devil with the parliament!' said Galidou, resuming his journey, 'it is not my cause that it will judge, it was not I who desired to invoke its justice, but my father has wished it so, and I have obeyed him; but for that, you would now be sleeping quietly in your bed, I swear to you. Fortunately, after the business has been dragging on for a year, the parliament seems at last to be stirring in the matter. Well, so much the better, for my father will now see that the parliament will do no more than the judges of the balliwick de Foix have done, and will let me act in my own way, and when the hour comes, may God confound me, if I leave one stone upon another of this accursed castle. I will level it as flat as the palm of my hand.'

Galidou was interrupted by the hoarse laugh of Langlois, who cried, 'Peste! what a taker of citadels, my friend! and how, and with what will you do that!'

'If you were to inquire with what I can break your bones, master clerk,' said Galidou, 'I would show you at once, but you ask a question which I would not answer, were it the king himself who addressed it to me.'

'There is no need of so high an authority to make you answer, master Galidou,' said the councillor. 'Suppose it were my pleasure to put such a question to you?'

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'I would let you have the pleasure of repeating it as often as you saw fit,' replied Galidou in a careless tone.

'Take heed to your words—'

'And do you take heed to your voice; we are approaching a spot where every sound spreads from echo to echo to the very depths of the Tunnel. Do not utter, then, that which you are unwilling should be heard.'

'The most prudent plan, I think,' said Langlois, 'would be to say nothing at all.'

'The most prudent above all,' said Galidou, 'would be not to speak in a cracked and trembling voice like yours. Do you not know, master Goosequill, that the fears of one party make up three-quarters of the courage of the other? Come! firmly upon the stirrups, we have but five minutes more of dangerous road; let us try to pass it without hindrance.'

He fastened the bridle of his horse about his neck, and said to the councillor, 'Do not interfere with the movements of your beast, his instinct will guide him better than you can do. As to you, master Goosequill, shut your eyes to keep your brain from growing giddy. If your nag stumbles, why at any rate, he will fall into the torrent with you; if not, you might fall all alone.'

Having said this, he cocked his musket, and spurred his horse into a trot. Galidou held himself almost erect upon his stirrups, with his weapon ready, and glancing upon every side for the appearance of an enemy in the hollow way which they were about to traverse. The councillor followed him, not without alarm, but with a voluntary exertion of courage which gave him an air of imperturbability. In the new position in which he found himself, the danger to which he was exposed wore an aspect to which the magistrate was unaccustomed. In this narrow path, where the slightest misstep on the part of his mule, might precipitate him into the foaming torrent, the possibility of an assault, and a conflict, hand to hand, with brigands, the gloom of the passage, these mountains inhabited by wolves and bears, all combined to operate upon the physical weakness of a man who seldom went beyond the walls of the city in which he lived, and although the moral courage of the magistrate impelled him resolutely forward, yet it may be said that the man trembled.

As to Langlois, although he had not followed Galidou's counsel, although he had not closed his eyes, but held them open in such a manner that they seemed ready to start every moment from his head, yet it is certain that he saw neither where he went, nor what was passing around him, and the moderate trot of his pony, seemed like a whirlwind bearing him on its fury. If he had not clung fast with both hands, and even with his spurs, which at last became entangled in the sides of his saddle, he would probably have lost his seat

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at the first step, and notwithstanding the convulsive grasp of his limbs, he would have fallen, as it was, before proceeding many paces, if Galidou's horse had not stopped on a sudden. The mule paused also, and the pony after him, and the sudden contact of these three animals, impelled the councillor abreast of Galidou, his mule being forced against the acclivity of the mountain, while the peasant was crowded to the very verge of the torrent.

A step or two behind them, Langlois' nag had fallen to the earth, and the unfortunate clerk lay prostrate upon the neck of his beast, but as his spurs held fast to the saddle, he was unable to extricate himself from this position, except by resuming his seat. His attempts to do this, however, were frustrated by the struggles of the pony, as it endeavoured to regain its feet, and which, unable to rise, from the weight which pressed entirely upon its neck, seemed at least resolved to shake it, and that with a violence which threatened the clerk with an instantaneous plunge into the abyss. In consequence of this, Langlois commenced to scream with such force and perseverance that it was impossible for Barati and Galidou to exchange a word. At last, by a desperate effort, Langlois extricated, not his spurs from the saddle, but his feet from his shoes, and cast himself precipitately against the slope of the mountain, where he continued to cry as before.

'Will you be silent?' said Galidou, roughly. 'Must I break your head to keep you quiet?'

Langlois rolled a few paces father off, and entrenched himself behind his pony, which at last had risen from the ground. In the meanwhile, the councillor, more pale than he would have wished, doubtless, and in a voice, which despite all his efforts, betrayed his emotion, turned to Galidou, and said:

'What is the matter there? why do you stop?'

'What is the matter? *par dieu!*' cried the latter, 'why it lies under your very nose. I stopped because I could go no farther.'

In truth, a pine tree which once grew upon the side of the mountain, about a fathom above the road, had fallen directly across their path, completely barring all passage, and at a spot where the way turned suddenly aside.

'It is an accident, doubtless,' said Barati, who, thanks to the moral courage with which he was endowed, had by this time regained his equanimity, 'the tree must have been uprooted by the hurricane.'

Galidou pointed with the muzzle of his musket toward the foot of the pine tree, while his flashing eyes roamed over every object around, and then with the indignation of a man who is without fear, but who is enraged at finding himself at the mercy of a hidden enemy, he replied:

'The wind does not make cuts like those. The axe has

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been here, and I am greatly deceived, or I know the arm, which, with three blows could fell a tree like that, for the axe has struck it but thrice.'

'Neither more nor less,' replied a voice from a group of trees on the other side of the torrent. 'You are not deceived, Galidou, three strokes of the axe, and the tree was down.'

Near as he was to Galidou, the councillor did not remark the slight agitation which the sound of this voice called up in the features of the young mountaineer; not a muscle of that robust frame trembled, his lips alone grew white, his teeth were set, and a deep expiration seemed to chase from his breast the deadly chill which had entered it. Whatever was his alarm, he concealed it, and as soon as he was able to speak, he said in a tone marked with too much bravado to deceive a man like Barati, who, accustomed as he was to collect truth from the slightest signs, was convinced that fear was his predominating emotion.

'Yes, yes, Jean Couteau, I recognized the strength of your arm in the tree, for you are a mighty wood-cutter."

'Yes, Galidou,' replied the voice, for the speaker was invisible behind the holms and briars that concealed him, 'when I wish to scale the summit of mount Barthelmi, and a fir tree or a larch bars the way, it soon falls before my axe; but if the obstacle were a man or a bear, I should strike it down as easily.'

Galidou had by this time recovered from his first emotion, for he replied with a sneer,

'I cannot tell whether that is true, Jean Couteau, for they say that you choose your path where men are not to be found.'

'Beware,' replied the one, who was addressed by the name of Jean Couteau, 'beware lest you one day cross it.'

'Tell me where you pass, and I will go thither when you please,' replied Galidou, 'and it will not be a tree that I will place across your path—it will be a man.'

'Enough of bravado on both sides,' said the councillor, sternly. 'Silence, I pray you, Galidou; let me question this man.'

'At your leisure,' said the guide, leaping from his horse, then, approaching the fallen tree upon which he placed himself astride, he added, holding his musket ready:

'Ah, Jean Couteau, it is in vain for you to hide that bear's skin of yours behind the branches of your holm; I see you, and I warn you that if you stir, if a leaf near you moves, I will send a bullet through your body. And now you may talk at your ease.'

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CHAPTER II.

The councillor had in the meanwhile prepared his question, and as soon as Galidou was silent, he said:

'With what intent have you who are called Jean Couteau, and you avow the deed, with what intent, I say, have you felled this tree across our path?'

It seemed as if Jean Couteau consulted his memory, or perhaps some concealed adviser, before replying, for he was silent for a moment. Then he answered:

'My master, the Baron de la Roque, fearing lest you might pass across his grounds so hastily as to forget to honour him with a visit, has directed me to stop you here, and to pray you in his name to accept the hospitalities of his castle.'

The councillor had not time to reply, for Galidou cried out at once:

'Your master lies in his throat, if he says that we have passed across his grounds. The torrent bounds his domains, and we are here upon the high road. Let him who stops us beware then! I will treat him as I would a highwayman.'

And suiting the gesture to his words he was about to fire at Jean Couteau, who disappeared, by throwing himself upon the ground, when Barati interposed a second time, turned aside his musket with the whip which he held in his hand, and rejoined:

'And if I refused to accept this invitation from the Baron de la Roque, what will then be the result, master Jean Couteau?'

Another individual, who until now had kept himself concealed behind the angle of a rock, suddenly appeared, while five or six muskets glittered through the bushes.

This man replied in a tone almost of politeness:

'The result, sir, will be, that we shall be constrained to bring about an accident here. Your horses will have made a false step, and you will have been precipitated into the torrent.'

Before these words were ended, Galidou had crept beneath the enormous pine which lay across the path, while Langlois had thrown himself upon his face behind a bush.

Barati alone remained erect upon his saddle, and replied:

'The Baron de la Roque must know, sir, that I visit this district for the purpose of seeing him, and it matters little whether the inquiries which I am to make are commenced with him or with another. Tell me, then, where and how, I may cross this torrent, and I will be at his castle sooner than he wishes perhaps.'

Galidou, who still kept beneath the shelter which he had

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found, suddenly uttered a prolonged whistle, when a mild and grave voice replied:

'We are close at hand just beyond the issue of the Tunnel. There is no need of wasting your breath, Fillou;* we have been in the hollow way for these three hours, and we saw the *roquets* come down from their kennel, and Jean Couteau felled the pine-tree, but as the land here is contested, notwithstanding your father's claims, we have not shown ourselves, lest it might be said that we began a needless quarrel. But if a single musket-shot is fired by the men beyond the torrent, woe to those whom we find there, even if the baron's page himself is among them disguised in the livery of one of his menials.'

'Fire! fire upon the knaves!' cried the one who had spoken last to Barati.

A few musket-shots were fired, and immediately returned, though no one was wounded by the hasty volley. All now withdrew behind some cover, to commence a regular fusilade. Barati alone remained motionless, confounded for a moment by the sudden discharge; his courage soon returned, and he exclaimed:

'Hold! In the name of the king, of whom I am here the representative, I declare him culpable of rebellion against his majesty who fires another shot.'

The name of the king, the commanding tone of this man, who remained thus alone and exposed before those who attacked him, arrested even the most furious, and the individual who appeared to command the *roquets* said to them in a milder tone:

'Hear what this man has to say to you.'

'I have to say that I am in quest of the dwelling of Baron de la Roque, and that for this purpose I need not men to prevent me, but some one to guide me thither.'

'That is all we ask, worthy councillor. Retrace your steps and you will find a narrow path leading to the torrent. When there, if you are not afraid to walk upon a board that we have thrown from one rock to another, you can cross it, and in half an hour you will be at the castle.'

'And I will serve you as a guide,' said Galidou, rising from the ground.

'You, *fillou!*' said the grave and mild voice which had been heard before, 'do not go thither; those enter la Roque who do not find their way out again.'

'Well,' replied the young man, 'if I do not find my way out, you will come and seek me. I have told the counsellor that I would act as his guide; and since it is his pleasure to

* The name by which a foster-father designates a foster-son.

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enter this den, I will enter this den, were it inhabited by bears instead of dogs.'

As he said this, Galidou retraced his steps, so as to get beyond the reach of his friends, who might have tried by force to prevent him from engaging in this rash enterprise. At the same moment, a man about fifty years of age advanced near the pine which crossed near the path which our travellers had pursued. In addition to a musket, which was slung across his shoulder, he wore at his girdle an enormous cutlass in a wooden sheath, and held in his hand a staff, eight feet in length, which terminated in an iron crook of sufficient strength to hurl stones of a considerable weight, if he who wielded it knew how to handle it skilfully.

'Comte Jose de Frias,' said this man to him who had ordered the men to fire, 'I do not charge you to speak to your master in behalf of Galidou; but he must come safe and sound from the castle of la Roque—dost understand me Don Jose? They must not touch a hair of his head.'

He stopped, while the individual whom he had addressed by the name of Don Jose drew near to the opposite verge of the torrent, to listen to him more distinctly; then sinking his voice, and speaking with an air of mystery:

'You may arrange that together as you please, but he must come to no harm. Dost thou hear me?'

The councillor observed the manner in which the shepherd, (for such he was,) had at first said *you*, and afterwards *thou*.—He could see also that the one, whom he called Don Jose de Frias, was a handsome young man of scarcely twenty years of age, and that he replied by a sign, disdainful indeed, but affirmative.

'Pastourel,' cried Galidou at a distance, as he approached the plank which was thrown across the torrent, 'you will tell my father that I am going to reconnoitre the kennel, to find out how we can enter it.'

'Be silent, fool,' said the young comte, as he walked onward along the opposite side of the torrent. 'God knows that if the baron were to hear you, you would not escape from his hands with a shred of sound skin upon your back.'

'Be silent, Galidou!' cried the councillor, 'raillery is the weapon of women and children.'

'I obey you, worthy councillor,' replied Galidou, in an humble tone, for he did not regret that one, to whom he could reasonably submit, should impose silence upon him, for all that he had said was prompted by that spirit of bravado, characteristic of the inhabitants of Southern Europe, which, although it is by no means a sign of cowardice, sullies even the most resolute courage.

A gloomy silence followed this tumultuous scene, and Baratti, accompanied by Galidou, made their way towards the

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bridge which had been prepared for their passage. When the councillor reached the spot, he stopped; having glanced behind him, he appeared surprised and indignant, and called out in a loud voice:

'Master Langlois! Master Langlois!'

'Who are you calling thus?' said Don Jose, from the opposite side of the torrent. 'I am directed to conduct you alone to the torrent.'

'He whom I am calling, sir, is an officer of the parliament who has been placed under my orders; his presence is necessary in the duty which awaits me, and he must enter the castle with me. Master Langlois!' he then called, in a still louder tone.

'Heh! Pastourel!' cried Galidou, 'beat the bush yonder with your crook, the bush near the pony, and prick Master Goosequill's sides a little, to make him hear.'

Pastourel took a step towards the spot thus indicated, when Master Langlois at once made his appearance.

'Ha, friend!' said Pastourel, 'if it is you they are calling, despatch, for it will not be safe to play the spy here presently.'

Although the voice of the speaker was remarkable for its sweetness and mildness, his features doubtless gave a serious meaning to his words, for Master Langlois darted forward, and ran at full speed towards the councillor.

'You would disgrace the parliament,' said the latter, in a tone of severity, 'if you were anything but the meanest of its servants.'

'Well, well,' replied Langlois, 'as mean as I am, I resign my office, if I may be permitted to leave you.'

'Come on, sir, come on!' said the councillor, 'or I will have you carried by force.'

He then traversed the bridge, and Langlois, intimidated by his threat, crossed it after him. Galidou was about to follow them, when the Comte de Frias, who had reached his hand to the Councillor to assist him in crossing, and who had just drawn Langlois upon the opposite border, pushed aside the board with his foot, before the peasant had ventured upon it, thus leaving him upon the other bank.

'Return to your father, poor fool,' said Don Jose. 'Neither I nor any one has sufficient influence in the castle of la Roque to save you from the danger to which your insolent boasting might expose you. Messire Barati needs none but us to accompany him.

The young man hesitated for a moment, and then exclaimed:

'I have said that I would go, and I will go!'

Then retiring a few steps, he bounded forward, and with a prodigious leap, alighted beyond the torrent.

'*Fillou*,' cried Pastourel, who, standing erect near the fallen

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pine, had witnessed this act of temerity, 'be prudent; they have need of you at Lavelanet.'

'That is the only word that can impose silence upon the braggart,' said Don Jose to Barati; 'his foster-father has told him that he is necessary to the defence of his family, and he will be as careful in preserving himself for this important duty, as he would have been in earning a good cudgelling, by assuming the airs of a hero.'

'But that does not prove that he wants courage,' said Barati, as he walked onward with Don Jose.

'I do not say that he wants courage, but he is not yet so well satisfied of this, as to feel no need of making a parade of his bravery. Before a man has put it to the test, he would attack Saint Michel to acquire a reputation. There was a time when I was so myself.'

'In that case, you have learned prudence early,' said Barati, smiling, with an air which had nothing offensive to the comte.

'Yes,' replied Don José, with a mien more serious than could have been expected at that age. 'When a man has sported with death at every hour of his life, he is accustomed to despise it, but he knows likewise that it sometimes comes too quickly, at an hour when it is not expected.'

Barati gazed at Don José in surprise, but the latter as if desirous of avoiding his questions, added hastily:

'And besides, sir, for his own sake and perhaps for yours, command this young man to keep silence; it is useless to provoke the lion, when, if unprovoked, he will scarely refrain from rending you."

Frias hurried forward to leave Barati an opportunity of profiting by this hint; and the latter, remaining behind with Galidou, extorted an oath from the young man that he would not brave the baron, if by chance he were summoned into his presence.

This point gained, Barati rejoined Don José, and the two walked side by side up the avenue of which we have spoken, and which led to the castle.

They were followed by the five soldiers, armed with muskets, who had fired upon the shepherds, but Jean Couteau was not among them. The shepherds, on their side, who had posted themselves along the Tunnel, to protect the passage of Galidou, had retired at an order from Pastourel, who did not however accompany them. He had lingered upon one side of the torent, while Jean Couteau remained on the other. Pastourel took a seat upon the fallen pine, Jean Courteau did the same upon an elevated portion of the rock, and both kept silence, as if waiting until the rest were out of hearing. When the two bands were at a suitable distance, Pastourel commenced the conversation. But before repeating it to our readers, we will

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draw a sketch of these two men, each of whom was quite remarkable in his way.

The one whom we have named Jean Couteau, was a man of forty years, short and stoutly built, yet by no means fat. It was the extraordinary development of his muscles, that gave to his limbs their enormous size. His legs were short, and his arms of a length unsuited to the rest of his frame. His countenance was destitute of that expression of intelligence, which prepossesses the spectator, yet it was by no means stamped with that air of ferocity, which their predatory habits had impressed upon most of those in the service of the Baron de la Roque. By comparing him to a sheep endowed with the strength of a bull, the reader will have a just idea of his aspect and his character.

Pastourel, on the contrary, was a man of lofty stature; the beauty of his profile, the elegance of his form, the calm majesty of his attitude, the soft light which shone in his eyes, would have attracted the attention of a stranger at first sight. He was about fifty-five years of age, and when we speak of his beauty, we mean such beauty as is suited to advanced manhood, which as yet exhibits no signs of decay. But that which was most remarkable, was the singular sweetness of his voice and the elegance of his language when compared with the station which he held in this barbarous community.

Pastourel, (as his name implied,) was the chief shepherd of Gali, the father of Galidou. He wore a large felt hat with a drooping brim, and a goat's skin, cut in the shape of a scapulary, which, fastened by a thick leathern girdle, covered a jerkin of wool. Jean Couteau was apparelled nearly in the same fashion, except that the front of his scapulary was a wolf's skin, and that which covered his shoulders was composed of the fur of the fox.

As we have said, the two waited in silence until the soldiers and shepherds were at a good distance. Pastourel was the first to speak.

'Do you know, Jean, why I have remained?' he said, in a soft tone.

'Yes, yes,' replied the other, 'it is on account of the *fillou*.'

'Do you think that Don Jose is able to protect him?'

'Hem!' rejoined Jean Couteau, 'who can tell what ideas may come into the baron's head! He may send him back to you with a new coat and a handsome present, and, then again, he may turn him out of the castle, naked as a worm, and with cropped ears.'

Pastourel breathed a heavy sigh.

'You would have done better to have kept him away,' resumed Jean. 'The surest means of leaving nothing in the hands of the baron is to keep out of their reach.'

'We have met him, face to face, more than once,' said,

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Pastourel, 'and he has carried off nothing from our encounters.'

'Except good counsel, by which he will hardly profit, and once, they say, a taste of your staff, which he has never forgiven.'

'No, no, Jean Couteau,' said Pastourel, 'I did not strike the Baron de la Roque: but one day when he said that which he had no right to say of a poor woman who was unable to defend herself, I told him that "all noble as he was, he had lied," and as he undertook to beat me, I defended myself.'

'Yes, and you defended yourself so well, that for a week he was unable to move hand or foot.'

Pastourel did not reply; he seemed absorbed in profound thought.

'Jean,' he cried suddenly, 'Galidou must be saved.'

'I know it,' said Jean Couteau, scratching his head, 'but that is difficult. Why did you not prevent him from coming?'

'Have I the right to prevent my master's son from going where he pleases?' said Pastourel, in a tone marked by deep and secret grief.

'Well, well,' said Jean Couteau, 'we will save him, but it must be within two days."

'Wherefore?'

'Because the baroness has taken it into her head to have her oratory carpeted with bear skins, and so I must go up into the mountain.'

'You will tell Don Jose, in my name, that the baroness must do without the carpet of bear skins, and you must remain in the castle.'

'You are mad, Pastourel, and—'

'Do as I tell you, and you will see. Yet still, if neither you, nor she, are able to save Galidou, send me the old signal, and then I will come and look for him myself.'

'You do not go up into the mountain, then, this year?'

'Not yet; the flocks have lingered upon the hills later than usual; we have been waiting for the councillor, that he might receive the depositions of all the shepherds, and the complaints of the fullers.'

'Well, now you can depart, for the devil seize me, if you ever see the councillor again. The Baron de la Roque has sworn an oath that he shall not leave his castle, except to return to Toulouse in a greater hurry than he came.'

'I do not know the councillor Barati,' replied Pastourel, 'but, unless I am greatly deceived, the baron will find him a man not easily intimidated.'

'In that case, he may never return to Toulouse.'

'Whatever may happen, forget not that I must know all.'

'Have I ever forgotten my oath, Pastourel?'

'No, Jean Couteau; and never has a man who daily risks

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his life so carelessly, displayed such gratitude for one, who by mere chance, saved him from the jaws of a bear.'

'It was because on that day I was not alone upon the mountain. My son was following me, and if the bear had despatched me, it had been all over with Pierrou.'

'By the bye, have you any news of your son?'

'Yes, yes, he is still a private in the company of the chevalier D'Auterive, the baron's nephew, and as the captain is soon to pass some days at the castle I hope that he will bring Pierrou with him.'

'So much the better, so much the better!' rejoined Pastourel, in a melancholy tone, 'you can then embrace your son. You are very happy, Jean!'

A tear stole from the eyes of the shepherd, and Jean Couteau replied in a low voice.

'But why do you not some day tell him —'

'Hush!' exclaimed Pastourel, rising in alarm, 'we have discoursed enough, too much, perhaps. Take care lest the baron should at last suspect our connivance when he sees his craftiest enterprises baffled."

Jean Couteau shook his head, and replied.

'No, no, there is no fear of that; your reputation as a sorcerer is too well established; he will think it is the devil who warns you of all. 'Twas only this morning that he promised me two hundred crowns if I would thrust my cutlass between your two shoulders, and four hundred if I could bring you alive to the castle.'

'Let him wish rather that I may never place foot within it. But when he hears that to-day's ambush has failed, it may excite his wonder.'

'Well! well!' replied Jean Couteau, 'has he not the councillor, and his clerk into the bargain, and then Galidou besides? He will not think to ask if you were here, ready to defend them. Besides,' added Jean, 'he is not always in a condition to comprehend what is said to him.'

'Aye, aye, after supper. But before supper, do not trust him. He is like some deaf men who hear more than one would have them.'

'Is it that master Gali—'

'Oh! master Gali is my master,' said Pastourel, 'and he is what he is. Adieu, Jean Couteau, and forget nothing.'

'Nothing, say you? Oh, there are not so many things to be done, that I should forget them. He, in the first place—he, in the second—he, always. Let me but save him, and I shall have forgotten nothing.'

'One word,' said Pastourel. 'The comings and goings of all these strangers who nightly visit the castle, have ceased, have they not?'

'Fortunately, for if the councillor found them here, it

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would be a very different affair from that of your master! And although they hold their consultations in the upper chamber, yet at times I have heard words that smell of heresy a league round.'

'Still the baron is a good catholic,' said the shepherd, carelessly.

'He worships that saint who will restore him the rights of pasturage which the king has granted to you, in order to encourage the manufacture of cloth in this district, which has been ruined by the departure of the protestants, who, to say the truth, have carried with them the best part of his earnings.'

'So then,' said Pastourel, 'you suspect that the baron would favour a protestant movement in the hopes of regaining his rights.'

God grant,' cried Jean Couteau, 'that the councillor may not amuse himself by visiting the upper chambers! He might be astonished at the piles of arms and ammunition that are stored therein.'

'He would be much more astonished if he were to visit the vaults,' muttered Pastourel, in an under tone.

But Jean Couteau did not hear these words, which seemed to have escaped Pastourel involuntarily, and the old shepherd added:

'Well, Jean, keep your suspicions to yourself, for if they were to reach the ears of parliament, it would not only cost the baron dear, but the chevalier D'Auterive also, and your son Pierrou.'

'Pierrou!' cried Jean Couteau. 'Ah, I can answer for him; he would sooner burn the Huguenots of the province than meddle with such a thing, and I do not see how he could have ought to fear from the discovery.'

'Jean,' replied Pastourel, 'you are too old a huntsman not to have found a wolf in the glen, when you thought you were near the den of a bear.'

'You are right, perhaps, for strange things are going on in the castle, and it is on that account that I have suffered Pierrou to enlist. But he has nothing to do with it—has he?'

The voice of Jean Couteau seemed agitated, both by alarm and indignation. He feared the power of Pastourel, and still he would not have hesitated to quarrel with him, if his son had by any chance been the victim of his diabolical influence. Pastourel understood him, and replied mildly:

'By my soul's welfare, your son is as innocent of all crime against God and the king, as the illustrious Duke de Nevers, the governor of the province.'

These words were uttered in a tone of raillery, which Jean Couteau did not remark, for he replied:

'I believe you; and still what you have said has frightened

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me. Listen, Pastourel! I will save Galidou, should it cost me my hide; but if any evil threatens Pierrou, you will avert it, will you not?'

'I promise you!' said Pastourel, in a tone of emotion.

With these words Pastourel waved his hand to Jean Couteau, and both withdrew in such haste that it was evident that they wished to overtake their comrades before they reached the place to which they were hurrying. Jean Couteau, rushing onward like a wild boar, through bushes and thickets, succeeded in his design, for he rejoined his fellows at a short distance from the castle.

His absence had not been unnoticed, however, for Frias said to him in a stern tone:

'What errand had you on the borders of the torrent that kept you there till now?'

'I think,' replied Jean Couteau, 'that you heard the promise the baron made me this morning, if I could lay hands upon Pastourel.'

'That is to say, if you killed him,' said Frias.

'Aye, aye, two hundred if I killed him, and four hundred, if I took him allive.'

'And you pursued him?'

'Yes, indeed,' said Jean, 'and he has been twice within reach of my cutlass.'

'And you did not kill him?' said Frias.

'I prefer the four hundred crowns to two.'

'Well, then,' replied Don Jose, in a low voice, 'slay him, and I will give you four hundred crowns, in addition to those the baron has promised you.'

Jean Couteau was stupefied at this proposition, but he imagined that the comte's only object was to rid the baron of a man whom he feared; and notwithstanding the inferiority of his station, he replied in a tone of contempt:

'Why did you not send a bullet through his body a moment since? for a man cannot approach Pastourel exactly as he wishes; he saw me behind him, and looked at me—you know how he looks at one, as if he saw into one's very soul—and he spoke to me in words which I do not comprehend. "You will tell Don Jose," he said, "that he must inform the baroness that she has no need of a carpet of bear skins for her oratory."'

'He told you that?' cried Frias, with a movement of alarm.

'Aye, aye! he told me that; and he added: "You must remain at the castle."'

'Ah!' muttered Frias, 'this man is a sorcerer; hell waits upon his bidding, that is sure.'

Then he added, with strange agitation:

'Well, then, you will remain at the castle?'

With these words he left Jean Couteau, and rejoined

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Barati, who was examining with extreme attention the approaches to the castle, elevated as it was upon the summit of a hill, and surrounded by ditches whose width and depth formed an obstacle not easily to be surmounted, although they were completely dry.

The drawbridge, which led to the only apparent entrance to the castle, was lowered, as if the occupant expected their arrival. No sooner had the last of those who accompanied Barati entered the fortress, than the drawbridge was raised, with a noise and din of chains, which started Langlois, and which caused Frias to shrug his shoulders, as if he disapproved of this threatening demonstration.

Barati turned, scanned the drawbridge and the portcullis, which was lowered with the same display, and he said to Frias, as the latter invited him to follow him:

'This is contrary to the order of the king.'

'That is an observation which you can make to the Baron de la Roque,' replied Don Jose, 'for you are about to be admitted into his presence.'

CHAPTER III.

They now traversed a vast court, and entered a vestibule, in which they found a score of bandits wearing military coats, although they carried no arms, except a long, wide rapier, suspended by a baldric, upon which were embroidered the arms of the Baron de la Roque. A number of muskets were carefully arranged in a corner, and a boy astride a drum was playing with the drumsticks. From the impatience which Frias manifested at all this display, Barati inferred that he looked upon this parade of rebellious force as imprudent, or perhaps he found it ridiculous. Still Don José did not speak, and the councillor, turning to a hallebardier who seemed to be on guard, said:

'Announce our arrival to the baron.'

The hallebardier, who was probably unaccustomed to the part which was imposed upon him, laid aside his weapon, opened the folding doors, and cried out in a ludicrous tone:

'Baron de la Roque, here are visitors!'

As Barati entered the hall, he said to Frias:

'This seems like a poor comedy.'

'Take care,' replied Frias, 'lest it become a tragedy.'

The appearance of the apartment into which Barati, his secretary, and Galidou, were ushered, was calculated to give effect to these words. It was a vast, wainscotted hall. Torches, fastened against the walls, illuminated it with a glare, which appeared the more gloomy to Barati, when contrasted with the light without, for every window was entirely closed, and the few rays of day which found their way through the shut-

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ters, were intercepted by long curtains of red velvet. In the middle of the hall stood a large table covered with the same material, and behind this table, upon which were placed two lights, each with three branches, sat the Baron de la Roque.

No judgment could be formed of the height of this man's stature, but he seemed endowed with prodigious strength; his broad chest, crossed by his folded arms, his powerful neck and large head, gave him an appearance well calculated to inspire alarm. But it was chiefly when the spectator examined his features with attention, that he was unable to repress his terror. A low forehead, surmounted by white and bristling hair, heavy eyebrows, which almost concealed his grey and bloodshot eyes, a nose hooked like a beak of a vulture, a sunken mouth and small lips, which disclosed a set of teeth, narrow, long and pointed, like those of a wild beast; a square, projecting chin, denoting the brutal appetites of this man—all these features made up an image, upon which was stamped the impress of craft and cruelty, nay, almost of blood-thirstiness. The baron was dressed with a sort of splendour; the embroidery and fashion of his garments had probably been in vogue some twenty years before the date of our narrative, and if he did not present the idea of a gay and gallant lord, he manifested at least an air of command and confidence in his own strength, which told with sufficient clearness that he was a man of power and authority.

Upon a low stool, but at the extreme end of the table, sat a young man, clothed in black, before whom stood the implements necessary for writing. Behind the baron, and standing at his right, was a menial, bearing upon a silver plate a pitcher and goblet of the same material. On his left, and stationed with an affected show of menace, stood a man with bared arms, clothed in red serge, and leaning upon an axe. Farther off, and ranged in a semicircle around the table, sat a score of men, like those whom Barati had encountered in the antechamber, except that each of them held a drawn sword in his hand. Lastly, at some distance from this group, near a high and wide chimney place, in which a bright fire was burning, a young woman of great beauty was seated in an arm chair, covered with crimson velvet; her feet rested upon a cushion, which served as a seat for a little girl of three years of age, who gazed at all this array with an air of astonishment, which proved that, to her, at least, the scene was a very unusual one.

Although Barati had at a glance scanned all the personages in this picture, and although from the awkwardness of some, and from the embarrassment of the young woman, who in vain affected an air of indifference, he understood that all this was a spectacle, arranged to inspire him with alarm, yet he was

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not the less disturbed by apprehension. The chief cause of this emotion was the aspect of the Baron de la Roque. It is true that at the instant when Barati entered the apartment, this man had resolved not to push matters to extremities, but his visage denoted him as one of those individuals who easily overleap the bounds of that moderation which they have prescribed for themselves, and who, when once a prey to their evil passions, immolate victims to their blind rage, without heeding the danger. Barati measured the peril, and we shall soon see the resolution with which it inspired him.

The councillor, followed by Galidou and Langlois, had advanced to the edge of the table. Then, seeing that the baron remained motionless, he looked towards the lady, who regarded him with restless curiosity, saluted her profoundly, and then, turning to the baron, placed his hat upon his head again. The old noble did not appear to notice it, but Don José and the headsman, for it was he who stood at the baron's left, were troubled at seeing the old lord reach his right hand over his shoulder to demand the goblet, which his cup-bearer filled to the brim with wine. To those who knew the Seignuer de la Roque, it was a sure sign that this proceeding had irritated him, for he had just put in practice one of his favourite precepts: 'A man should always drain a cup of wine between the anger which he feels, and the first word which he speaks.'

To a certain point this precept was not amiss, and twice or thrice its application might be salutary, but this number passed, the palliative became a furious stimulant, and it was precisely in the cases in which the baron carried his system of moderation to excess, that he committed the most fearful outrages. It was not strange, then, that the young man and the dame appeared so terrified. As to the other personages, they lived in so profound and constant awe of the baron, that this circumstance could neither increase nor diminish. Jean Couteau alone gave utterance to a growl of disapprobation, which, fortunately for him, was drowned by the baron's laughter.

'Ha! ha! ha! José, you are a fine youth! I asked but one prisoner, and you have brought me three. This one is the councillor, doubtless; as to the fellow yonder who trembles so, it is some cur of the parliament's base court, I suppose; and you, rogue, who stand so erect in my presence, who are you?' he said, addressing Galidou.

The latter, in whose eyes this spectacle was a serious affair, and who had felt a death-like chill creep through his veins as he entered the hall, had placed himself in an arrogant attitude, in order to conceal his alarm; but when the baron fixed upon him those eyes, that glistened like a wild cat's, his voice

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failed him, and very opportunely, as he would have replied by some rude insult, for the very reason that he was terrified, and heaven only knows what would have followed. But Don Joeé de Frias answered quickly:

'This one, my Lord, is a peasant, who served as a guide to the councillor and his secretary.'

Galidou, ashamed of his hesitation, advanced a step in order to reply, when Barati, stretching out his hand, said in a calm and commanding tone:

There is no one here who has a right to speak, but I, the representative of the king of France and of the parliament.'

The baron dropped his brows over his eyes, which now shone in their deep orbits like two bright and bloody points, and exclaimed violently:

'You shall have the right to speak when I question you, base gownsmen! Who are you, and what brings you upon my domain?'

The councillor in his turn, fixed a firm and dignified glance upon the baron, and replied in a voice in which neither fear nor anger was evident:

'Adrian Anselme Joutard Baron de la Roque, I have come upon your domain, by order of parliament, to interrogate you; you and those who inhabit it, concerning the misdemeanors and crimes committed daily upon the inhabitants, shepherds, spinners, weavers and fullers of the village of Lavelanet, which crimes and misdemeanors are imputed to you, to you, Baron de la Roque, and to the men in your service.'

The amazement of the baron alone permitted Barati to speak at such length, and suspended for a moment the ire of the old seigneur. He was so greatly surprised to find himself interrogated and accused—he who had resolved to enact a representation of that feudal jurisdiction which his ancestors formerly exercised in this castle, that he remained for a while confounded and stupified, but as if the current of his blood and of his anger, arrested for an instant, had rushed on with increased violence, he became perplexed, and cried with a tone that thundered with fury:

'Do you not know, wretch, to whom you speak? Do you not know where you are? Do you not understand that you are in my power?'

'I am in the castle of the Baron de la Roque, who is accused of robbery, of pillage, of public devastation, and I am here to question him.'

The baron was seized with a convulsive tremor.

'Langlois,' resumed the magistrate, without deigning to notice the baron, whose lips foamed with anger, and who clutched mechanically the handle of a pistol that lay before him, 'Langlois, sit at this table, and write down the answers

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which the baron will make to the questions which I am about to put to him.'

Langlois was morally incapable of obeying him, but the habit of hearing a similar order, acted upon him mechanically, as it were, and he took a step toward the table.

'Drive out yon mangy hound!' cried the baron, suffocating with anger. 'Begone, knave!' he added, half rising from his seat, and seizing a long staff that rested against the arm of his chair.

'Master Langlois,' said Barati, in a voice that echoed through the entire hall, 'wind about your neck the chain which you wear as a clerk of the parliament, and let who will lay hands upon you, I declare him guilty of high treason, for having insulted an officer charged with the execution of its justice.'

The unhappy Langlois, who wore his chain beneath his jerkin, passed it about his neck, while the baron cried with wild fury:

'Tie him with his own paltry bawble, and knit him up in the antechamber! Cast the carrion into the moat!'

The men who stood behind the baron gazed at each other, and made a movement in advance. Barati continued:

'Langlois, take your place at this table, and write down the baron's answers. Do your duty, sir, do your duty. In the king's name, obey!'

Whether impelled by the magic of this name, or by the tone of authority in which the councillor had addressed him, or by the habit of obedience to which we have referred, Langlois seated himself at the place pointed out to him. The men who were about to lay hands upon him retreated, and the baron, who had risen with the staff in his hand, fell back upon his chair as if confounded and dismayed.

'A seat, young man,' said Barati, turning to Galidon, who, comprehending this lofty and energetic resolution, had felt the emptiness of his own bravadoes. He took a chair at random, and brought it to Barati, who seated himself in front of the baron, but at some distance from the table, while the latter, having recovered from his first stupor, cried in a hollow voice:

'Fill! fill! fill!'

The baron drained three goblets of wine, and like a knight who for a moment unhorsed, seats himself again in his saddle, he glanced upon Barati with eyes in which anger and menace flushed with redoubled fury. Barati endured this glance without flinching. There was a moment of terrible silence.

'Baron de la Roque,' said Barati, 'various complaints have already been made against you before the bailiwick of Foix, for the numerous misdeeds which I am about to rehearse to

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you. Whether from negligence or from fear, the judges of this town have not attended to the grievances of the inhabitants whom it their duty to protect, and the latter have addressed themselves directly to the parliament, which has entrusted to me the care of investigating and prosecuting the affair. Prepare, then, to answer me.'

Probably the libations of the baron had inspired him with some happy idea, for he gazed at the councillor with a smile of ferocious joy, as the leopard watches the heedless bounds of the fawn, which he is sure to seize at a single leap, and the stern noble muttered between his teeth:

'The man is mad! by my life, he is mad!'

Owing to this change in the baron's mood, the councillor was enabled to proceed without violent interruption.

'The following are the facts,' he resumed, drawing out a parchment from which he proceeded to read.

'The inhabitants of the village of Lavelanet, devoting themselves to the manufacturing of cloth and serge, keep numerous flocks of sheep, which they send in the summer season to browze upon the mountains, held in fee by the aforesaid village. Now, these flocks, which are with difficulty preserved from beasts of prey, have often been dispersed and scattered by the Baron de la Roque, and driven into glens, ravines and forests, like animals of the chase, some smitten to death by the Baron de la Roque or his dependents, others throttled by his greyhounds; some driven by fear into inaccessible abysses, others wandering through the woods, a prey to wild beasts.'

The baron, still busied doubtless, with his happy thought, planted his elbow upon the table, supported his chin in the hollow of his hand, and listened with a scornful air to this recital, accompanying it with slight nods in the affirmative. Barati raised his eyes, and observed these movements.

'Proceed, proceed, sir!' said the baron with a sneer.

'In addition to this the inhabitants of the said village have established, for the fabrication of their cloth and serge, six fulling-mills upon the different streams of water, here below designated upon a map which they have had prepared by a skilful surveyor. In order to protect the said mills against sundry freshets, they have raised dykes, bulwarks, conduits, and other works of wood and stone, and at various times the said works have been injured, and one of them belonging to a person named Galidou, has been entirely destroyed by the dependents of the Baron de la Roque.'

The patience which the old castellan had imposed upon himself seemed to draw to a close, for Barati, having paused for a moment, he addressed him no longer with insulting raillery, but with an air of ill-repressed indignation.

'Have you nearly done?'

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'Almost, sir,' said Barati, coolly.

He resumed his task with a voice as calm and firm, as if he were reading an inquest before the parliament.

'Beside these acts, which have inflicted serious damage on the inhabitants, the Baron de la Roque has arrested, or caused to be arrested, divers mules and horses laden with merchandise, belonging to various inhabitants of the town, and chiefly to the aforesaid Galidou; and the said baron has kept possession of the merchandise.'

'Is this all?' cried the baron in a hoarse voice, as with his accustomed sign he demanded his goblet.

The councillor continued without allowing himself to be disturbed,—

'Finally, several shepherds having resolved to defend their flocks against an attack from the baron, one of them named Pierre Laniou, was wounded in the head by a sword-stroke dealt by the baron, from which blow he fell dead on the spot.'

'The baron's teeth chattered with rage, his hands trembled, and he muttered, in a repressed voice:—

'And he will not be the only one!'

The councillor did not hear him, and continued to read, but with a rapidity that one uses in rehearsing a concluding formula which is usually appended to such documents, after the enumeration of the important facts.

'In consequence of all the grievances which have just been rehearsed, the inhabitants of the village of Lavelanet, after having addressed themselves to the baron, who has answered them neither as a just man nor as a gentleman, have had recourse to the parliament, in order:—

'What is that you have read?' cried the baron, quickly, as he rose and displayed for the first time his lofty stature; 'what is that you have read?' he repeated, bending over the table upon which he supported himself with one hand, while with the other he reached towards the parchment which Barati was reading, as if he wished to take it from him—'what is that you have read?'

'I have read what is written, sir baron.'

'And these boors have said that I have answered them neither—'

'Neither as a just man nor as a gentleman,' said Barati, placing his finger upon the line where these words were written.

The baron drew himself up to his full height, and with flashing eye, bristling hair, and foaming lips, exclaimed:

'To horse, my men! to horse! take torches and arms. By to-morrow's dawn, not a house of these knaves shall be standing. They shall be reduced to ashes; all—to the very last. Burn, slay, without ruth or rue. Away! away! and speed ye!'

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So violent was the baron's fury, so indignant the accent of his voice, so imperative the tone of his command, that some of those who were in the hall hurried out to execute his orders.

This burst of anger, and above all, the direction which it had taken, had so astonished Barati that he stood for an instant motionless, following the baron with his eye, who had dashed aside the chair upon which he had been seated, and was now striding up and down the hall like a madman. Barati, rising also, turned at last to Don José, and said to him:

'Is there here no reasonable man to whom I can explain the orders of the parliament?'

At these words the baron stopped suddenly, and with less fury than could have been expected, he said to the councillor:

'The orders of the parliament, sir! What have the orders of parliament to do here? I do not know them, and I do not wish to know them! In truth, it is shameful to the king, to the nobility, that causes are to be judged by men wearing black or red robes! What has brought you here? what would you? How dares a man who calls himself a judge, utter the follies contained in that idle piece of parchment? How could a parliament of Toulouse credit such a complaint? How could a parliament permit a score of boors to say and to write that I have not answered to their grievances as a gentleman?'

At these words the baron ground his teeth, and added with his former fury:

'But do you know, sir, the meaning of these words? Do you know what has passed! Do you know that among this scum, there has been found a wretch, a madman, a vile peasant, so audacious as to send me a challenge; me, Baron de la Roque, declaring me, if I refused to answer it, unworthy of the title of a gentleman. And still, persuaded as I was, that it was some madman, I have not sought out this fellow, I have not hung him upon a tree by the road-side. And this is the injury that these boors have dared to draw up as a grievance in a complaint to parliament! and parliament receives it! Did you know the facts, sir? did you know them when you read that insolent document?'

'I knew them, sir,' said Barati, calmly, 'and he who has appealed for justice to another source than parliament, will be punished if there is occasion for it.'

The baron gazed at Barati as if it were a maniac who spoke to him.

'Punished, if there is occasion, sir, you say? And thus the meanest of wretches shall be at liberty to insult me? and the parliament will judge whether I must endure the affront or not! Am I an old woman, that such things may be said to

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me? And the parliament of Toulouse has thought and believed that I would permit, without punishing the bearer of so insolent a message! Sir, sir! prepare to ask pardon on your knees, here, on the instant, before all present, or *mordieu*! sir councillor, parliament will have a more serious affair to settle than a mere clamor of peasants.'

'The affair has become sufficiently serious for you, sir, baron,' replied Barati, 'inasmuch as you have ventured to address to me this insulting proposition.'

'Do you see that man?' replied the baron, whom drunkenness and anger had entirely deprived of reason and reflection, as he pointed to the headsman who stood near them leaning upon his axe, 'do you know who he is? do you know that I have but to deliver you into his hands, and it is all over with you and your comrades?'

Barati gazed for a moment at the headsman with a calmness that disturbed him, then turning quietly toward the baron, he replied:

'Whoever, he may be, sir baron, I need not think of him yet; not until I have pursued my investigation concerning those who have aided you in the acts of which you are accused, will I enquire how far he is guilty as an accomplice.'

The councillor when he uttered these words, had scarcely a hope of preventing a deed of violence by his firmness, yet at the risk of his life, he resolved to perform the duty which devolved upon him in maintaining his character as a judge. Accordingly he did not speak with that air of command which he had worn until this moment. The baron saw a sign, as he thought, in the tone with which Barati had addressed him, and wishing to complete his victory, he replied with an air of sarcasm and cruelty:

'This man is the headsman of the Baron de la Roque; and you see,' he added, pointing to the weapon upon which he was leaning, 'the axe is weighty and sharp.'

Barati, overcoming the disgust inspired by the drunkenness rather than the anger of the baron, cast a contemptuous glance at the weapon to which the castellan pointed, and answered haughtily:

'The axe of the parliament, sir baron, is more weighty and sharper than that of La Roque. He who wields it does not grow pale beneath the glances of those whom the parliament delivers into his hands, and yet he has severed loftier heads than yours; and the blood of the Duke de Montmorency should teach those who listen to me, that rebellion can not escape him, even if armies or a whole province stood at its service.'

This mention of the high jurisdiction of the parliament startled the old castellan, although it recalled a somewhat distant epoch; but, above all, it disturbed those who had

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counted on the baron's influence to excuse their obedience to him, and as the vassals whom he had ordered to prepare torches reappeared at this moment, an air of general discontent was visible.

During this scene, notwithstanding Barati's sense of his own personal danger, one thing struck him as singular; neither José nor the baronness made a gesture or uttered a word to interfere. They watched with evident anxiety indeed, the different currents of the baron's anger, but without seeming to fear the consequences, whatever they might be.

'We are ready, my lord,' said one of the armed vassals, who had entered with their torches in their hands.

'It is well!' cried the baron. 'Let us away, and until my return let these three men be fast locked in the prison. I will decide to-morrow what I will do with them.'

'One moment, Baron de la Roque,' said Barati, placing himself in his way; 'in the duty which has been entrusted to me, parliament has foreseen that you might refuse to answer, and the case has been provided for. Do you express this refusal in form?'

The baron shrugged his shoulders, but did not reply.

'Your silence, resumed Barati, 'is evidence of a refusal. In this case, I, Leonard Barati, councillor of the parliament of Toulouse, arrest you, commanding in the name of the king, all here present to lend me their aid; and I declare those who refuse, to be rebels, and I reserve to myself the right of prosecuting them, and bringing them to punishment as such.'

The baron retreated a step. Everybody remained motionless.

'Is there not here one faithful subject of the king?' cried Barati.

No one answered.

'Langlois,' said Barati, 'note down what has passed. You will read it to the baron, and then we will withdraw, to pursue our enquiries immediately elsewhere.'

It would be difficult to describe the emotions of the old seigneur at this display of unalterable calmness, upon which all threats and danger were unable to make the least impression. To render them comprehensible to our readers, we must explain their origin.

CHAPTER IV.

When the Seigneur de la Roque had learned that a councillor of the parliament had been sent into the district to make an inquest, he imagined, as in general all men of the sword, and all those who live by the employment of brute force, are inclined to imagine, that he was about to deal with some fat civil judge, who would swoon at the sight of a musket, and

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who would consider himself very fortunate in escaping from his hands, by proclaiming him innocent of all the crimes which were imputed to him. Perhaps, as we shall see hereafter, he had still more serious motives for throwing obstacles in the way of the investigation.

He had consequently arranged this theatrical representation, in order to terrify the miserable judge whom he had expected. But the scene, which was intended but for a comedy, had suddenly changed its character, as Don Jose had foreseen from the judgment he had formed of Barati, when he arrested him. Accordingly, the danger had been actual from the very commencement of this singular interview, but at this moment it had become more imminent than ever. On the one hand, the baron's anger and mortification had reached their height, and on the other, he was not altogether willing to place himself in a state of open rebellion against the parliament. He regretted his foolish attempt to intimidate the councillor, yet he felt at the same time that he had gone too far to escape the severest censure, and he asked himself if it were not better now to push matters to extremity. He seemed to count the men who surrounded him; one would have said that he was following out in his thoughts a plan of revolt already long prepared. But whether the wine which he had drunk had confused him, or whether he hesitated to form so dangerous a resolve, he cast himself upon his chair, bending his head, as if in thought, while from time to time he reached his hand towards his cup-bearer, without uttering a word. This gesture, without doubt, was familiar to the menial, for he understood it, and each time he poured out a full goblet for the old castellan, who drained it at a draught.

Langlois, who was writing with a trembling hand, now and then cast a side-glance at this pantomime, and it filled him with alarm. Still no one spoke; profound silence prevailed in the apartment; nothing was heard but the scratching of the pen upon the paper, when the baron caught the stealthy glance which Langlois cast upon him, and as if this glance had kindled the rage which glowed within him, he started up like a madman, struck Langlois to the earth, seized upon the paper which he had been writing, tore it, trampled it beneath his feet, and exclaimed, in a paroxysm of rage:

'Hold, scurvy hound! vile scrivener! Thus I value your justice, and the justice of the parliament! Seize that man, and bind him,' he added, pointing to Barati. 'Do as I bid you!' he cried, placing his hand upon his sword. 'Set on!' he said, pushing his vassals towards the councillor, without venturing himself to approach him.

A general tumult ensued, during which Jean Couteau hastily approached the councillor.

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'Follow me, for heaven's sake!' he cried; 'the leash is broken, and the mad dog bites all within his reach.'

Barati would have resisted, but Jean Couteau made a signal to two men, who threw themselves between him and the baron, and endeavoured to drag him from the apartment; the two others raised Langlois, who lay stretched upon the ground, completely stunned by the blow which he had received.

The baron brandished his sword, crying with all his might—'Bind them!—to the dungeon with them! I will deal with them!' and thus increased the confusion. Jean Couteau availed himself of it to say in a whisper to Galidou:

'Follow me, if you would not be hung!'

The scene which had just passed had so absorbed the young man's attention, as to make him forgetful of himself, but as soon as he found himself an object of notice, he resumed his boastful assurance, and replied:

'I do not fear your baron's gibbet, no more than I fear your cutlass, Jean Couteau.'

He had scarcely uttered these words, when Don Frias, who until now had remained motionless, rushed towards him, and while he endeavoured to conceal him from the eyes of the baron, said, pushing him onward violently:

'Go, wretch go!'

'By St. Peter!' said Galidou, 'if we were alone, face to face, in a fair field, you would not treat me thus, without paying dear for the insult.'

'Wilt go, fool! madman!' said Jean Couteau, seizing Galidou by the shoulders; and, clasping him in his arms of iron, he strove to drag him from the hall.

Although Jean Couteau was endowed with almost Herculean strength, yet he had to deal with a youth too vigorous and too active, to suffer himself to be led away like a child. Accordingly, Galidou, whom Jean Couteau had lifted from the ground, planted his feet against the frame of the door at the moment when the latter was about to thrust him into the antechamber; and owing to this point of resistance, he hurled Couteau so violently backward, that he fell to the ground, bearing his burden with him.

They rolled together to the baron's feet, when Galidou leaped up nimbly.

'Peste!' said the seigneur, breaking out into a drunken laugh, 'the knave has stout ham-strings. Ha! Jean Couteau! you look as if you were stunned with the fall.' Then turning to Galidou, he added: 'Come, fellow, if you will enter my service, I will give you fifty crowns a-year. What is your name?'

'Pierre Lescuret,' exclaimed Jean Couteau, with strange eagerness.

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'Yes, my lord,' said Frias, who, although astonished at the ready invention of Jean Couteau to save Galidou, was resolved to profit by it. 'Yes,' he said, 'Pierre Lescuret, a poor madman, who is fit only to serve as a guide to travellers.'

Any one but Galidou would have seen in these words a settled design to save him; but the young mountaineer, who had lately made a trial of his prudence in keeping silence during the discussion of Barati and the Seigneur de la Roque, and in resigning his due share of the baron's anger—Galidou, we say, looked upon it as a point of honour to refuse the protection of a false name, and exclaimed:

'My name is not Pierre Lescuret!—my name is Andre Galidou!'

An exclamation of vexation escaped at once from the lips of Jose and Jean Couteau, while the rest of the baron's attendants gathered eagerly around the young peasant. This universal curiosity, should it cost him his life, (and nothing was more likely,) delighted Galidou; he placed himself in the middle of the hall, with his head erect, and his hat cocked upon one side.

As a hound, which would have courageously leaped at the throat of a fox, if he had met him free in the woods, but which, if he finds him taken in a trap, snuffs about him with distrust, snapping at him from time to time, and then retreating to a distance, so it was with the baron when he held Galidou in his power. He walked around him, holding his sword in his hand, and pricked him slightly, measuring him from head to foot with his eye, and saying:

'Ah, ha! this knave, then, is Andre Galidou!'

The latter leaped backward, and placed himself in an attitude of defence; the baron's men were about to rush upon him.

'Gently! gently!' cried the baron, 'do not hurt him; the dog must be hung all alive, and whole.'

The young braggart turned pale, not so much at the idea of death, as at the baron's savage scorn.

'Ha!' resumed the latter, it is the dung-hill bird that sent me the cartel! You must take an ass's girth and halter, for he does not deserve to be beaten with the lash of a noble hound. We shall see if his skin is as ticklish as his courage. Ah, *mordieu*, I need not now go to fire the hovels of these boors of Lavelanet; here is sport enough for us to-night, and all day to-morrow.'

This incident had arrested the councillor's departure, and when he heard the baron speak thus, he thought it base to abandon one who, whether from ostentation or from honour, had insisted upon accompanying him. Barati advanced, therefore, to the Seigneur de la Roque, and said:—

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'If this young man has been guilty of any offence towards you, he shall be punished as he deserves.'

'You may be sure of it, master councillor,' said the baron, in a savage tone.

'But he is not a vassal of yours,' replied Barati, 'and you can exercise no authority over him.'

'Master Barati,' cried the baron, whose purple visage expressed the most savage ferocity, 'I will have him flayed alive—I will cast him to my dogs—I will hack him in pieces if it pleases me, and neither king, nor parliament, nor the whole world shall hinder me.'

The councillor, who, in the face of such a threat would have raised his head aloft, had it been addressed to himself, replied, in a mild tone:—

'If you would permit me to remain alone with this young man, I could persuade him, I hope, to ask pardon at your hands.'

Galidou, who had been for a moment struck dumb at these terrible threats, seemed suddenly to arouse himself at the word 'pardon,' for it touched his vanity, and he said:—

'Ask pardon of a mad wolf? No, no, worthy councillor! When a man meets one in a glen, he slays him, and that is what I should have done the first time the baron passed within reach of my musket. He may flay me alive, roast me afterwards if he pleases; the message I sent him is not the less true, and I repeat it to his face; he is good for nothing but to let loose his *roquets* in the night against cottages, in which there are none but women and children, or against flocks of sheep; but as to trusting himself alone with a man, he with his sword, and I with my staff, or with nothing, if he wishes it, he dares not do it! I have said it, and I repeat it; he is nought but an old toothless wolf, who runs as soon as a good shepherd's dog shows his teeth.'

In the baron's present condition it appeared impossible but that such an insult should lead at once to some sanguinary result, but the old seigneur listened to it as to something that had no power to reach him.

'Ho, there! my good Galidou,' he cried, 'you have just put an idea in my head. A week ago, I found an old wolf in a pitfall, whose teeth are somewhat loose and blunted. He is now in a large iron cage in the kennel of the great court. *Pardieu*, it will be pleasant sport to loose you, the one against the other, and to see if you will make the brave beast turn his back.'

'Sir Baron,' said Barati, 'it is a barbarous sport.'

'It will be so, sir,' replied the baron, with a smile and a glance of ferocity; 'it will be so! So much the worse if you are in a hurry. Your business must wait for that of this clown's. Do as I have directed you,' he added, turning to his

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attendants, 'place these gentlemen in the dungeon, and yonder knave in the kennel, and let him have something to eat. He will need all his strength to-morrow for the encounter.'

He then added harshly:—

'Follow me, José.'

The latter bowed and cast a glance upon the young woman, who arose and left the hall. The baron went out without waiting for a reply, and Barati followed the two men, who walked before him and Langlois, and who thrust them into a kind of damp cellar, where they found themselves in total darkness.

Jean Couteau approached Galidou and said, in a rude tone:

'As for you, follow me to the kennel, and pass the night in prayer to God, that he may send one of his saints to save you from the jaws of the wolf.'

'I need but my two hands for that, Jean Couteau.'

'Aye, aye,' said the other, 'as to the wolf with the four paws, I believe it, though it is a rough beast; but it is the wolf with two feet that will not loose his hold upon you.'

'We shall see!' said Galidou, who now seriously repented of his imprudence, but who, at the risk of his life, would not exhibit the slightest sign of fear.

Jean Couteau, followed by a few domestics, led Galidou across a large court, and approached a small tenement, in which were enclosed a dozen dogs, who, aroused at the sound of steps and the glare of torches, began to bark and howl most frightfully. Galidou, who, until this moment had advanced with a resolute step, suddenly paused, as he saw Jean Couteau prepare to open a low gate, and he could not prevent himself from saying:—

'Are you going to shut me up with these famished beasts?'

'Do not fear,' said Jean Couteau, 'if they are to eat you, it will not be to-night.'

As he said this, he opened the gate, and twelve or fifteen large dogs rushed towards it.

'Back!' cried Jean Couteau, with the voice of a Stentor, and at the word the whole pack slunk away, and resumed their places upon the straw which was strewn around the walls, uttering angry growls, which echoed on all sides. Jean Couteau took a torch from one of the domestics, saying:—

'Go and attend to your own affairs! Do you think I need aid to keep these dogs quiet, and to shut up this stripling?'

Galidou, who had been thrust into the kennel, found himself in a large chamber, vaulted above and paved beneath. At the right of the gate at which he had entered, and raised to about half the height of the apartment, he beheld a cage of iron, nearly six feet square. From the top of the cage an enclosure of boards reached to the roof, forming, consequently, a kind of loft, in which there was a wretched mattrass. This

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cage was that in which, at the time when the Baron de la Roque kept a complete pack, they secured those hounds, which, from their ferocity, were dangerous to others, and the loft was occupied by the menial who had charge of the kennel. It was in this cage that the wolf was confined, which Galidou was to contend with on the morrow, and it was in the loft that he was to pass the night.

The young man could not avoid casting a glance upon the ferocious animal, which had withdrawn to the back of its cage, with ears erect, and disclosing its long, blackish teeth.

Jean Couteau took a small ladder, and placed it against the cage.

'Mount up there! and quickly!' he said to Galidou.

The latter hesitated, and as the domestics had now retired, he felt tempted for a moment to seize Jean Couteau by the throat, hurl him to the ground, and thus endeavour to escape. But as this would be no easy task against a man endowed with the strength of Couteau, and as the strife would doubtless have excited the dogs to rush upon the combatants, and to tear them both in pieces, Galidou paused.

'Mount!' repeated Jean Couteau, 'and when you are once aloft, draw the ladder up after you, for otherwise the hounds would soon be at your heels.'

'And you think that the baron will force me to fight with the wolf to-morrow?'

'He will do as he has said,' replied Jean Couteau, 'unless you contrive to tear away one of the bars of the window that admits light into the loft in which you are to sleep, and then you will find it easy to creep through the opening, and glide into the court.'

'Is that true, Jean Couteau?' said Galidou.

'I can tell you one thing, and that is, you have only to try it, for nothing worse can happen than what has been promised you.'

'But suppose that I could descend into the court, it would be necessary for me to find my way out of the castle.'

'Perhaps some one may be at hand to conceal you. Perhaps, also,' continued Jean Couteau, as if struck with a sudden thought, 'perhaps it would be better to keep quiet. It is an old story,' he added, as if speaking to himself, 'and perhaps—'

'What do you mean?' asked Galidou.

'Nothing, except that you have only to keep quiet, and above all, do not cry out if any one comes here in the night!'

'Who?'

'You will see. Come, come, mount! despatch, for they may come to hear what we are talking about so long.'

Galidou ascended the ladder; Jean Couteau withdrew and closed the gate.

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CHAPTER V.

While this scene was passing between Galidou and Jean Couteau, Jose had followed the baron to his chamber. The old man was still burning with indignation, but he repressed it, and when Jose said to him :

'What service can I render you, my lord baron?'

The latter glanced upon him with an air of vulgar cruelty and replied :

'Don Jose, are you capable of an honest action?'

The baron's manner was so at variance with his words, that Frias felt convinced that he was about to propose to him the commission of some crime. He preserved his calmness, however, and replied :

'There is nothing which I am not capable of undertaking for the honour of your house.'

This answer did not appear to please the baron, for he rejoined abruptly :

'I am sole judge of the honour of my house, and all that I ask of you is to tell me, whether you are ready to do my bidding without farther inquiry.'

'My lord baron,' replied Jose, after a moment's reflection, 'I am ready to do all you command, but upon one condition.'

'A condition, sir! Do you speak of imposing conditions upon me? Do you forget that you are in my service?'

The young man reddened at this word.

'Baron de la Roque,' he said, 'when my father the Comte de Frias sailed for the Indies, he placed me in your hands as a ward, and not as a vassal. I have performed the duties of page in your dwelling, and although my age should have called me to a different occupation, yet I wished to testify my gratitude toward you; but do not forget that I am your equal in rank. If you are willing, I am ready to conclude a bargain with you, provided you grant what I desire in return for that which you demand.'

'And what do you desire of me?' said the baron with a gloomy air.

'That will depend upon the service which you expect of me. When you have mentioned it, I will inform you of my desire.'

The baron reflected, and after a long silence, he replied :

'Be it so, Jose, be it so! You are young, and it is quite likely that you have desires which I have overlooked, perhaps. Aye, aye, I will give you money, and the permission to spend it after your own fancy. Is this your desire?'

'My lord baron, what I desire depends upon the service you have to require of me.'

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'You will do what I require, Jose, for, after all, you are as deeply compromised as I am. Have you not arrested upon the high road this mule of the parliament, who is deaf to all reason? These gownsmen of Toulouse are the men to make a serious thing of that which was but a jest—for it was but a jest, you know, Jose, my good friend, although I appeared to be very much in earnest and very angry.'

'Yes, in truth,' replied Frias, 'I believe that it was intended for a jest; and why not tell him so? that would suffice—why not ask his pardon?'

The Seigneur de la Roque started at this word.

'Ask his pardon!' he cried. 'You, Frias, a nobleman, talk of asking pardon of a vender of decrees! No! not if they should strike me with the axe of Montmorency!—and of what use would it be now? Do you think if he ever leaves this castle, this croaking councillor will not enter a complaint against me? and then, God knows what would come of it! No, that is not the way to manage it.'

'Perhaps you are right,' replied Don Jose, 'but what have you resolved upon?'

'You are very stupid this evening, Jose,' rejoined the baron.

'It is because I am afraid to understand you.'

The baron shrugged his shoulders, and replied:

'Ha! *mon dieu!* it will be their own fault. Do you think, if, at this moment, you were to go to the councillor and his scribe, and tell them in your name, or in that of the baroness, that you are afraid I may commit some violence, and that you counsel them to escape secretly from the castle, do you think that they would hesitate?'

'Perhaps not, my lord baron, although the councillor does not look like a man easy to be intimidated.'

'I tell you that he trembles in his shoes,' replied the baron, roughly. 'And he has good reason; for in one way or another, I must be rid of him, and he will be very dexterous or you very awkward, if his foot does not trip in crossing the torrent.'

'It may be so,' replied Don Jose, 'but Galidou is an active fellow, and strong enough to carry them across this dangerous passage upon his shoulders.'

'Who speaks of Galidou, Jose?' said the baron; 'he will never leave the castle, I answer for it.'

'But, my lord baron,' rejoined Jose, 'it was a jest, also, was it not, when you said that you would make him fight with the old wolf?'

'A jest, sayest thou? No, no! and well for the clown if the wolf throttles him at the first leap, for if he outlives the combat, I will tear out his teeth singly, and his hairs one by one. I would rather butcher the judge and his scribe with

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my own hand, I would rather let him escape, though he should stir up all parliament against me, than to lose this Galidou!'

Jose turned pale at these words, and arming himself with all his courage, he replied:

'Well then, sir baron, the first and the only condition upon which I am ready to serve you is this, that you do no harm to this Galidou.'

After all that the baron had said, it was an act of great boldness in Frias, to demand thus formally the life of the culprit. The old man remained silent for a moment, as if doubting whether he had heard aright. A few scornful exclamations escaped his lips, then fixing a stern and suspicious glance upon Frias, he replied:

'You consent to dispose of the judge and his scribe?'

'Yes, my lord,' said Frias, in a hollow voice.

'And in return, you claim the life of Galidou?'

'Yes, my lord.'

'Don Jose, you are a traitor!'

'Sir baron!'

'I have long suspected it. There is some treachery on foot. You turn pale, Don Jose! you tremble, Comte de Frias!'

In truth, at the word 'treachery,' the young man's limbs shook beneath him.

The baron grasped him violently by the arm.

'You have listened! you have played the spy upon my secret interviews!'

'I!' said Don Jose.

'You know that a rebellion of the protestants is on the eve of breaking out, and you would use the secret against me.'

The glance of amazement which Don Jose cast upon the baron at these words, admonished him of his imprudence, and affecting the hesitating utterance of a drunken man, he added:

'Aye! aye! it is true! I do not wonder now that the shepherds have been so often warned of my projects! It is you who have betrayed them! you!'

The above alarm, which had for a moment disturbed Don Jose, at once vanished at this accusation, and he exclaimed with ardour:

'My lord, I am no traitor. If the shepherds have discovered your designs it is because they have watched them carefully; if they have often defeated them, it is because you have often entrusted them to others beside myself. For the rest, it is useless to inquire into the motives of my demand. You require a service of me, and I tell you the price at which I am willing to render it. If you are not content with this, seek out another, who will serve you more faithfully than I have done until this day.'

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'It would not be difficult to find one,' said the baron. 'Retire, but forget not that if the prisoner should by chance, escape, it is you who will be answerable for it.'

'I am not your jailor, baron.'

'You are, if I wish it, and I do wish it. Take a musket, a sword, take any weapon whatsoever, and go watch at the gate of the prison in which this wretch is confined. You shall guard him! it is my will that you should! and obey! obey at once! and forget not that if he escapes, I will expel you from the castle as a traitor.'

This threat produced a singular effect upon Don Jose. An air of keen vexation passed across the young man's face; he reflected for a while, and at last said to the baron:

'Well, my Lord, I consent to obey. I will watch at this gate, but promise me, that, if Galidou come off conqueror from his encounter with the wolf to-morrow, you will spare his life.'

'I do not refuse,' rejoined the baron. 'The request is not unreasonable, and I would be just before all things. As to the councillor and his scribe, since you refuse to listen to my proposal, I will decide upon their fate to-morrow.'

'As you think best, my lord.'

Jose now withdrew, and the baron walked to and fro in the chamber, muttering aloud:

'What interest can Don Jose have in the safety of Galidou? Would he betray me for these peasants? No, no! he hates them too sincerely. Still I have heard it said that this boar has a sister of uncommon beauty. It was the baroness who told me this. During the lifetime of the Sire de Labastide, this young girl often went to the castle, and Paula has spoken of her to me with enthusiasm. If that is so, I was wrong in sending him to guard the prisoner; he will suffer him to escape. At his age what will not a man do for the woman whom he loves? I must look to it lest he aid Galidou to evade my power.'

The Seigneur de la Roque, contrary to his custom, left his chamber, and went to see what was passing in the court. For this purpose he did not cross the outer hall and vestibule which led from his chamber, but followed a long gallery upon which opened all the sleeping rooms of the castle. He was in the act of passing his wife's chamber, when he heard the sound of voices. The baron paused suddenly, and extinguished the light which he held in his hand. This movement seemed prompted by jealousy. Of all the male inhabitants of the castle, but a single one would have attracted the attention of the baroness, and this one was Don Jose. The baron resolved to listen; he could hear the speakers engaged in earnest conversation, but was unable to distinguish a single word. Patience, nay, even prudence, was no feature

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in the baron's character; he tried to open the door, and found it locked. Irritated by this circumstance, he pushed against it with such violence that it gave way, and he beheld Don Jose standing before him.

Without reflecting, without inquiring into the cause of his presence in this chamber, the baron was about to rush upon the young man, sword in hand, when the child of whom we have spoken, leaped from her mother's lap, and running to the baron, cried in a tone of entreaty:

'Papa, do not kill the shepherd, Jose does not wish it, and he has been crying, and begging mamma to save him.'

This innocent testimony as to the cause of Don Jose's presence in Paula's chamber, arrested the baron, whose pride was not the less wounded, however, at having manifested the emotion and the suspicion which had disturbed him. He gazed for a moment at the two, and but for the words just uttered by a child scarcely four years of age, he would have been convinced that he had surprised a secret which closely touched his honour, so great was the agitation of Paula and the handsome page. As we have said, the baron had left his chamber in the belief that Jose's anxiety for Galidou's safety arose solely from his love for Catharine, the shepherd's sister. It was under the influence of this belief that he said to Frias:

Pardieu, master Jose, your love must be warm to spur you to this insolence—to enter by night into the chamber of the baroness!'

If the seigneur instead of gazing at Don Jose, had glanced at Paula, his former suspicions would have returned; a livid paleness spread across her features, and a glance in which were blended hatred and despair, flashed from Don Jose, to the baron, as if she would have urged the young man to assail her husband.

Jose however replied with considerable calmness:

'I know that my presence here needs an excuse, but it is owing solely to my desire to save young Galidou.'

The baroness but her lips, frowned and said in a tone of bitterness:

'Yes, my lord. Don Jose, I know not wherefore, has been suddenly seized with so passionate an interest for this clown, that if you had entered a moment sooner, you would have found him on his knees, praying and weeping as if for his own life.'

'It is true,' said the child, 'he cried, and mamma told him to be gone.'

'If it were for my own life, madam,' said Jose, 'I should not have entreated with tears; it is for more than my life, it is for my honour.'

Jose uttered these words in a tone of profound sadness, and cast a suppliant and despairing glance upon the baroness.

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The baron interpreted his grief according to his former suspicion, and turning to his wife, he said, with a smile:

'This astonishes you, Paula, and certainly it is a thing to cause surprise, but love has subdued ruder hearts than that of our page Don Jose.'

'What do you mean, sir?' exclaimed Paula, in a tone which might have been caused by sudden terror or offended prudery.

'Well, well, do not be angry, Paula; your confessor will absolve you, if by chance our words offend your chaste ears. Yes, Paula, see to what love has reduced the callous Don Jose! he weeps at your feet to save the brother of a paltry maiden, whom you would not suffer to approach you.'

The flashing eye of the baroness wandered for a moment, alternately from her husband to the young man, as if to demand an explanation of these words. Don Jose himself had not clearly comprehended the baron's meaning, and he gazed upon him steadfastly. The baroness was the first to break this singular silence.

'What mean you, my lord? Whom do you term a paltry maiden? Is it Catharine Gali?

The baron nodded. Paula continued in a changed and hollow voice:

'It is for the sake of Catharine Gali then that he would save Galidou!'

'This young girl has been almost reared in your father's castle,' said Jose, addressing the baroness in a faltering voice. 'I hoped that your friendship for her would interest you in behalf of her brother.'

The baroness had cast her eyes to the ground, and if the light of the solitary taper which burned in the vast chamber, had sufficed to illuminate her face, her husband would have remarked the profound agitation of her features, and the rage and despair which she was unable to subdue. Fortunately for her the baron came to her aid, and replied:

'That is craftily done, master Jose, to count upon the friendship of the baroness to further the love which you feel toward the beautiful Catharine. You have acted like a loyal gallant, in good sooth, for you have carefully concealed the secret motives which prompted your pity for Galidou.'

Jose hesitated for a moment, and then answered with more firmness:

'No, baron; the safety of Galidou seemed to me an act of justice. I addressed myself first to you and you refused me; then as I thought it an act of pity and benevolence also, I applied to you madam, and you have not yet answered me.'

'Ah,' replied the baroness, in a tone of raillery, 'it is the beautiful Catharine, for she is beautiful, she was so, at least, some years since—it is the beautiful Catharine whom you love!'

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'I do not love Catharine, madam,' said Don Jose with vexation, 'but I wish to prevent a deed which I consider culpable, and more dangerous to us all than you imagine.'

'In truth?' said the baron with a sneer. 'It is the danger which would result from Galidou's death, which troubles you? And how is it that so prudent an adviser could consent a moment since to rid me of a councillor of parliament, a deed far more hazardous, and that upon condition, that I would spare this wretch.

'Is it so?' cried the baroness, in a voice which caused the young man to tremble, 'Don Jose has consented to commit a murder in order to save the brother of Catharine?'

'He has,' said the baron, with the same sneer.

Frias appeared to be on the rack. At last, as if weary of dissimulating, he exclaimed:

'Well, yes, sir baron, Galidou must be saved and I ask it of you as a recompense for my services; and you, madam, in the name of the ties you hold most dear, in the name of your child, implore the life of this young man, I conjure you. God will recompense this act of mercy more bounteously than you think, perhaps.'

'Comte De Frias!' cried the baroness between her closed teeth.

'Consent, madam!' replied Jose earnestly, 'consent! save this shepherd, save him!'

'Your love blinds you, Don Jose,' said the baron in a stern but not indignant tone, 'you should be sufficiently familiar with the strict views of the baroness on such subjects, to know that she must look upon your prayers in favour of a graceless maiden as an insult. Retire then, and to convince you that I have no wish to reduce you to despair, I promise that on the morrow, I will give Galidou all reasonable means to come safe and sound from the combat. He shall be furnished with a cutlass and a staff, and if with these weapons he does not rid himself of the old wolf in a minute or so, he does not deserve the interest you take in him. Come, Don Jose, you can inform him that he owes this favour to your intercession.'

The baroness sat motionless, with drooping head and glazed eyes; she seemed no longer to hear what was said.

'Madam!' said Jose, bending upon his knees before her. She drew backward with an air of terror, and Jose, turning to the child, said, with tears in his eyes:

'Charlotte, dear child, beg your mother to save this young man, beg her sweetly, I pray you, my pretty Charlotte!'

The baron gazed at Jose with an air of stupefaction, while the child replied with tears:

'Yes, yes, mamma will save him!'

'You know,' said Jose, addressing the little girl, 'you know that he is protected by the old sorcerer, and that this man can

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do every thing, and cast wicked spells upon little children.'

The baroness glanced at Don Jose with an air of mingled pity and contempt, as if she believed in the reality of his fear. In the meanwhile the baron hurried Don Jose toward the door of the chamber, saying:

'You are mad, Jose. How can you say such things to a child? Go, go!'

He then added, as if he had found an infallible means of consoling him:

"We will free you from all blame in Galidou's death, if it so happens that he dies, and as with this sort of people, the girls share in the heritage, it will be quite a good match, it will help to repair your poverty, for the boor is rich."

'If Galidou dies,' cried Jose, who was now without the chamber, 'God help us all!'

He added a few words that were not heard, for the baron at once closed the door.

'Well, baroness, what do you think of the matter!' said the Seigneur de la Roque.

'It is for you to act as you see fit.'

'True, true!' said the baron 'but when I remember the love I felt for you, Paula, I pity this poor Jose, and if you on your side are interested in Catharine, I would consent, perhaps, to release this knave, after having inflicted upon him a punishment which he would not forget very easily.'

'I have no advice to give you in this affair, baron. It is for you to decide how far it becomes you to favour your ward's passion for a milkmaid.'

The baron shrugged his shoulders, and replied with more mildness than could have been expected of him:

'In sooth, Paula, you are too severe toward this young man. I do not attribute it to malice, but when you became mistress of this castle, I thought that you would bring joy and pleasure with you, but it is now more gloomy than ever. Your devotion is extravagant, Paula; it renders you too strict and censorious. I am called the Wolf of la Roque, I am looked upon as harsh and brutal, and I will not deny that I have often inflicted cruel punishment upon those who have offended me, but I confess that Jose's love and despair have moved me. It reminds me of my youth; I suffered then as he does.'

'Baron,' replied Paula, in a cold and haughty tone, 'I will excuse you from making me the confidant of your amours with the peasant girls of your domains.'

The baron bit his lip, and replied with a sad and severe accent:

'You have ever been virtuous, Paula, and you are too proud of it. God grant that you may never have a fault with which to reproach yourself, for you would meet with no pity, you, who have pity for none.'

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Paula crossed herself at these words, and replied, dropping her head on her bosom:

'Baron, I have need of repose, I have need of prayer this evening; I have never demanded of you any other liberty than that of attending to my devotions; shall I not obtain it?'

'At your pleasure. Pray to God as often as you will. For my part I also feel disposed to devotion this evening, and to do my duty as a Christian, and therefore I will pardon Galidou; this will have as much worth, perhaps, in the eyes of the Lord as to move the lips often, while not a generous emotion stirs the heart for a single moment.'

'You are master of your actions, my lord,' replied Paula rising.

The baron understood this movement, and turning toward the door, he said:

'Good evening, good evening! permit me to light my lantern by your taper, and I will go at once, and bear the good news to Don Jose and to Galidou.'

The baroness started; she endeavoured to be silent, but impelled by that spirit of sarcasm which few women know how to check, she replied:

'Why do you not send a messenger to the beautiful Catharine to inform her of the success of Don Jose's prayers!'

The baron was on the point of replying to this ill-timed pleasantry, when suddenly frightful cries were heard in the court, and almost at the same moment Don Jose appeared, pale, haggard, wild, exclaiming:

'He is dead! he is dead, madam! torn, devoured by your dogs!'

'It is not possible!' said the baron, terrified at such a death.

'Come and see the scattered remnants of his body! his torn garments! come, come, baron!'

The court-yard suddenly resounded with the baying of dogs, and loud above all were heard the howls of the old wolf.

'But how has this happened?' said the baron. 'How do you know it?'

'Notwithstanding your orders, yes, sir, notwithstanding your orders, I resolved to save this young man; I went to the kennel; I opened the door carefully! I entered; and to my horror I beheld your dogs feeding upon remnants of palpitating flesh; I tried to chase them away, but drunk with blood, they turned and attacked me, and but for my sword I should have fallen a victim to their fury. Some of your vassals then came up with torches and we recognised the remains of Galidou's body and the shreds of his garments; the poor fellow was not in the loft, and we found the ladder against it; he must have attempted to escape, and perished by a most frightful death.'

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The baron clasped his head with both his hands, and exclaimed:

'Is it possible? are you sure of what you say?'

'The gate was locked, and the ladder leaning against the loft.'

'Ah! we must at least tear the remains of this unhappy youth from these ferocious animals. I will go thither; I will go thither!' said the baron.

He at once left the chamber of the baroness, and hurried into the court. When there, a frightful spectacle met his eye. The dogs had escaped from the kennel, each bearing away a portion of bloody flesh, which they dragged along the court, while the menials, armed with whips pursued them, but without being able to make them resign their booty.

'Where is Jean Couteau?' cried the baron.

A dozen voices called Jean Couteau. The latter replied from the window of a hay-loft, and said in a piteous tone:

'I attended to your order, my lord. I made him ascend into the loft, I saw him draw up the ladder and I warned him besides, not to descend; it is not my fault.'

'Who says it is your fault?' replied the baron in a gloomy tone. 'But the dogs know you better than any one else; get them into the kennel again, and let these remains be collected in a coffin that they may at least be buried in holy ground.'

Jean Couteau descended, but, whether it were that his alarm overpowered him, or that he failed to give the usual emphasis to his threats, or that the dogs, gorged as they were with blood, did not recognise his voice, some time elapsed before they were driven into the kennel, and before the menials could collect into a chest the fragments which they tore from their jaws. The baron, disturbed by a gloom and anxiety, such as he had never felt till now, remained in the court until the last dog was driven in, and then turning to Jean Couteau, he said:

'Go for father Anselmo, of the convent of the Franciscans. Do not tell him what has happened, but bid him be here at break of day.'

'To do that I must be able to leave the castle.'

'I will go to my chamber and get the keys, I will myself let you out at the postern gate.'

Jean Couteau appeared vexed at this precaution; he replied, however, in a tranquil tone:

'In that case, my lord, permit me to dress myself, for I was sound asleep when this din commenced.'

'*Mordieu*,' cried the baron as he retired, 'I do not know if I shall ever have the courage to see a stag embowelled again, and to cast its humbles to the hounds.'

Jean Couteau suffered a suppressed chuckle to escape him, and clambered up to his loft with the rapidity of a leopard,

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while the baron returned to his chamber through the great hall, the scene of his interview with Barati.

During this while an interview of a very different character was passing between the baroness and Don José.

The child, who had remained awake much later than usual, had at last fallen asleep in an arm-chair, thus leaving them at liberty to pursue their conversation without embarrassment.

'So then, Don Jose,' said the baroness, in a tone of bitter raillery, "the brother of the beautiful Catharine has been devoured by the baron's dogs.'

'Yes, Paula,' said Jose, 'and it is not Catharine's brother alone, it is not the poor peasant alone, that they have destroyed; they have destroyed your life and mine, and perhaps that of this child.'

'In good sooth, you are mad, Jose!' said the baroness in a low and tremulous voice. 'How are my honour and my life connected with the welfare of this boor?'

'You are resolved not to understand me, Paula; you would not understand me when I begged you to save him; you listened to a foolish conceit of the baron's; you listened to your jealousy, to your hateful suspicions, and Galidou is dead! Woe to us both!'

'And wherefore?' rejoined the baroness, 'why should his death bring us woe? What? you, who consented to assassinate a councillor of the parliament; you, who beheld no danger therein, except for the baron, do you think we are lost because a peasant has met his death by accident?'

'It is because of one thing which I have not dared to tell you, Paula, during these five years, it is because there lives a man who is in possession of the secret of our fault, and of the birth of this child.'

The baroness stood erect and motionless; except that her eyes, which were open, darted fearful glances, a spectator would have thought that all life had completely left her, she was so pallid and so cold.

'There lives a man,' she said stammering, 'who knows that I, the daughter of the Vicomte de Labastide—'

'Yes,' replied Jose, dropping his eyes before her flashing glance, 'and this man is Pastourel, Galidou's foster-father; and when this fool followed me to the castle, he placed him under my protection, Paula, and at a word from him I understood the vengeance with which he threatened me, if misfortune happened to him whom he loves as a son. And this son is dead, this son has perished in the most horrible tortures!'

'Oh!' rejoined the baroness, still gazing steadfastly upon Don Jose, and uttering a kind of suppressed murmur, 'oh, there is a man who has known the secret of my life for five

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years! a man who has held my honour in his keeping for five years! And this man still lives? Jose,' she added, in a tone of fury, 'you are a coward!'

Frias bent his head, and replied in confusion:

'This man is proof against lead and steel—this man is a sorcerer.'

'You are a coward, Jose!' resumed the baroness.

She then seized a *couteau de chasse*, which lay upon a table near at hand, and exclaimed wildly:

'And where is he to be found? this man who is proof against lead and steel!'

Jose gazed at the baroness with a terror replete with admiration; with her flashing eye, her lofty brow, her lips parted and trembling, the cutlass gleaming in her hand, Paula looked strangely beautiful. The inspiration of despair which had prompted her question, passed like an electric spark from the soul of the baroness to that of her lover. He exclaimed:

'Wherever he is I will find him, Paula; and wherever I find him I will force him to eternal silence!'

The desperate energy which had fired the baroness, vanished as if by magic, and dropping the weapon which she held, she replied:

'Yet to what end, Jose, to what end? It is too late! it is too late! Besides,' she added, with an expression of gloomy scorn, 'you would shrink now, as you have shrunk before. You are not a man, Comte de Frias; you can fly, and I counsel you to do so. As for me, I am resolved to die!'

'No, Paula, you shall not die!' cried Jose. 'This man'—his voice trembled as he spoke, 'this man—I will slay him to-morrow—this night! I will slay him, Paula! take courage!'

'You will slay him? rejoined Paula, in a hollow voice. Are you sure of saving me by it?'

'I hope so, at least.'

'Alas! and that is all you can promise me? a hope!—And still what is this man, who can but accuse, in comparison with him who can punish?'

'Paula,' said Don Jose, in a trembling voice, 'Paula, I do not understand you.'

'Your paleness tells me that you understand me, Jose. Go, leave me, sir! Do you not hear the footsteps of the Baron de la Roque returning to his chamber?'

'Paula,' replied the young man, 'wait until to-morrow evening, and then banish me from your presence, if you are not satisfied with what I have done.'

'Adieu henceforth, Jose! adieu for ever!'

'Oh, say not that, Paula! I shall see you again! To lose you would be death!'

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'Speak lower then, Comte de Frias. That is my husband leaving his chamber.'

She paused, but her eyes, which were fixed upon those of Don Jose, turned slowly toward the cutlass which gleamed upon the floor.

'Well, then!' said Jose, starting forward as if to seize it. But he stopped, exclaiming:

'No, never! And still I will save you!'

He rushed headlong from the chamber, while Paula muttered in a hollow voice:

'Coward! coward!'

She took up the cutlass, placed the point against her breast, and raising her eyes to heaven, murmured:

'After all, this will give me safety!'

She at once fastened the door of her chamber, and before retiring to her bed, where no sleep would visit her, she bound around her loins a girdle bristling with small points of iron, and fell in prayer at the foot of a crucifix, exclaiming:

"Oh, God! has not my penance been severe enough, and must I die dishonoured? Aid me, save me from a crime to which I am tempted—to save myself from blushing at a fault.'

After these words, which, in her despair, she had uttered aloud, she bowed her head before the crucifix, and continued to pray with sobs and tears.

As the singular character of this woman, in which devotion was thus blended with cruelty, will be developed in the course of this narrative, we will omit analyzing it completely; we will merely observe to our readers that, of all the words which they have heard her utter, a single sentence will, perhaps, best explain it. 'Must I die dishonoured?' This came entirely from her pride. In her eyes her fault was serious, but only as it led to disgrace, and it is evident that to escape from shame she would not have hesitated at a crime of deeper dye. But Don Jose did not second her, Jose was not the accomplice for this woman of violent passions, and neither by the death of her husband, nor her own, could she obtain that which she called her safety. The reader will now permit us to leap at once over time and space, and lead him to the summit of a lofty mountain where he will learn some results of the occurrences which had taken place in the castle of the Baron de la Roque.

CHAPTER VI.

The sun was rising, and illuminated the mountain top with a reddish gleam. The mists of night, condensed upon the blades of grass, shrouded its slope in a garb of greyish white, which was checkered by the red, blue and violet tints of the thousand drops as they fell from the loftiest trees. The crest

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of the mountain, covered with a dense forest of firs, whose gloomy foliage was deluged with dew, shone with all the colours of opal. The declivity of the mountain, from its fir-crowned summit to its very base, where a wood of oaks and birch trees crept insensibly upon the plain, offered the aspect of an immense prairie, intersected by ravines, and varied by a few isolated groups of trees. Here and there were visible the vestiges of some clay cottages, which had been deserted, and had been in part destroyed by the tempest. Deep silence reigned around, broken by the murmuring of a brook, which fell tumbling into the sinuosities of a ravine; not a voice was heard, not a cry of beast, whether wild or tame, not a note of bird. The stillness was so solemn that it would have inspired the heart of the most careless with gloom and awe.

Still the place was not entirely deserted, for at the most elevated spot of this immense pasturge a man stood leaning against a fir tree, with his chin supported in his hands, which held a staff, the extremity of which was planted in the earth. At the feet of this man, lay an enormous dog, of that brave and faithful race, which the Pyrenees alone produce. He gazed at the scene which was displayed at his feet, and his glance overlooking the forest of oaks, watched sadly the circling columns of smoke, which rose from a village, the roofs of which, covered with bright tiles, shone blue and violet amid the foliage of the surrounding trees, like vast beetles gleaming in the grass.

This man had stood thus in silent contemplation for more than half an hour, while not the slightest movement betrayed the current of his thoughts, when the dog which lay at his feet began to prick up his ears, and to assume a watchful attitude. The man, admonished by this slight movement, slowly left his place, and advanced about a hundred paces out upon the meadow; when here, he turned and gazed at the wood, and with a care which proved his confidence in the instinct of his companion. The dog had followed his master, and when the latter stopped, instead of crouching at his feet, he kept a step in advance, with his restless eye directed toward the wood.

Pastourel (for it was he) loosed his cutlass from the sheath that hung at his girdle, and with a tranquil air awaited the danger which seemed approaching. He turned his glance upon his dog, and said, in a low voice:

'Who is it, Fidele?'

The dog commenced barking, though not furiously, neither did his hair bristle as if at the approach of a wild beast, and in a moment a shrill and melodious whistle was heard.'

'Oh, it is Jean Couteau!' muttered Pastourel.

He replied by a whistle similar to that which had attracted his attention, and returned toward the border of the wood of

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fir trees, from which Jean Couteau soon emerged. These two men approached one another without any outward signs of friendship, without any manifestations of the pleasure which they felt at meeting with each other.

'Have you eaten?' said Pastourel.

'No, I was looking for you, to share with you this morsel of salt goose.'

'In that case,' said Pastourel, taking a seat upon the ground, and turning in front the pouch which was slung across his back, 'in that case I have done well to wait for you.'

Jean Couteau followed the example of Pastourel; both thrust their hands into their knapsacks, and placed between them the provisions with which they were supplied. Their store was composed of brown bread, salt goose, a piece of hard, dry cheese, and a few nuts. Pastourel drew at last a wicker-covered bottle from his pouch, placed it to his lips, swallowed a portion of its contents, and passed it to Jean Couteau, who was less temperate, and who after a long draught, returned it to Pastourel, crying in a joyous tone, as if the liquid which he had just tasted had bewildered him.

'Well, Pastourel! have you seen the *fillou?*'

'Yes, I have seen him,' replied Pastourel, in a sad tone, 'for I could not sleep, and I recognised his step at a quarter of a league from the house. It was I who opened the door for him, but he was in such haste to embrace his father and his sister that he did speak a single word to me.'

'Then he has not told you how I saved him,' said Jean Couteau, who was now busily engaged with the viands.

'He told his father, perhaps,' replied Pastourel, 'but I was not present, and when I expected to return, to speak with him, my master came and bade me go at once to the mountain, in order to see where we could drive the flocks this year.'

'And you see that I was not mistaken in directing you to this pasturage.'

'No, no, the grass is good, but still the land is contested, and if we should choose it, quarrels and mishaps might follow.

'And where the devil would you go?" said Jean Couteau. 'The other pastures are bare as rocks! Bah! bah! the Baron de la Roque will have enough to do to extricate himself from the affair which he has brought upon his shoulders last night.'

'What affair? The arrest of an honest councillor and a mountain shepherd is not a matter cause the least anxiety to a man like the baron.'

'I do not think so, Pastoural; this honest councillor has more courage beneath his gown, than the baron has behind his walls. I know the Seigneur de la Roque; he got into too great a passion, he swore too much, threatened too much, drank too much, not to show that he feared this honest coun-

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cilior, as you call him, who did not yield an inch to him, and who treated him as the lieutenant of the police would treat us, if we were brought handcuffed before his tribunal.'

'So much the better!' rejoined Pastourel, sadly, 'so much the better that parliament has men who will protect the poor peasant against the malice of the noble; but tell me how Galidou demeaned himself. Was he afraid? was he recognised? and did Don Jose help to save him?'

'Let me relate the affair as it happened, and you will see what you are to think. As to the Comte de Frias, I do not know with what intention he opened Galidou's prison, but the *fillou* is saved, and that is the main point.'

'Yes, yes, that is the main point for him as well as for me,' replied Pastourel, 'but I must know to whom I should be grateful, for I committed his safety to the Comte de Frias likewise.'

'*Ma foi*! said Jean Couteau, if I was quicker than he, it was not his fault, perhaps.'

'Of that I will judge. Tell me now all that happened.'

We will leave Jean Couteau to recount in his own way the scene which we have described to our readers, and will take up his narrative at the moment when he closed the gate of the kennel, after having left Galidou in the loft.

'I knew well enough,' he continued, 'that the *fillou* put no great trust in me; you have never told him, I suppose, that I owe my life to you? Never speak of it; he would boast of it through all the country, and we could never contrive any thing together.'

'I have never spoken of it; he looks upon you as one of the baron's most faithful servants.'

'And I am so,' rejoined Jean Couteau, 'ready to do any thing he commands me, provided it is naught against you, or against the *fillou*, since you love him as if he were your own son. But as for his father, as to old Gali, who is as wicked as the baron, and who, unable to do mischief openly, does it in secret, I would cut his throat as quietly as I did the calf's I put in Galidou's place last night.'

'What do you mean?'

'Ah, it is a droll affair,' said Jean Couteau. 'Imagine—I had not reached the opposite side of the court, when I heard the mad-brained Galidou shaking the bars of the window, so as to be heard throughout the castle, if the barking of the dogs had not drowned the noise. So I thought that if I left him to manage in his own way, his escape would easily be known in the morning. For, long before the castle was opened, long before the baron had given out the keys, some good soul would have been found to warn the Seigneur de la Roque of his flight. Now, it was a mere trifle to get the

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fillou out of the kennel; the most important and difficult part was to get him out of the castle.

'With this thought I returned to the window, and to keep Galidou quiet, I whispered to him that he would have a bullet through his head if he continued to rattle at the bars of his prison.

'I had already determined upon my plan. I left the great court, and stole softly toward the stables. The cowherd was asleep, and, as usual, drunk as a swine. I untied a fine young calf and let it gently after me, after having tied its muzzle with a cord, for fear of its bleating, and as this silenced it, I took it upon my shoulders and carried it to the kennel. Fortunately, the dogs, excited by the presence of Galidou, had kept up a horrible din, so that their howling drowned all the noise that I made. I opened the door of the kennel, and told Galidou to take off the greater part of his clothes, and to throw them down to me.

'He refused at first, not knowing what I could want of them; but as I contrived to make him understand that I could have no interest in coming there in the night, unless it was to save him, he at last consented. So I thrust the legs of the calf into his breeches, wrapped every thing around it that he sent down to me, and when it was nicely dressed I dragged it to the door of the kennel, drove my cutlass into its throat, that the blood might excite the dogs to the chase, and tossed it into the midst of the pack. Then there was a din, as if a thousand devils were let loose. Such a snapping, and throttling, and howling—*ma foi*, it was enough to tumble the old castle about our ears! The old wolf started up in his cage, and for want of meat, began to bite and tear the iron bars. I hastened to bring Galidou down, fastened the gate of the kennel, and led the *fillou*, trembling like a leaf, to my hay loft. When there, I explained to him that when the day broke, they would come to look after him, and on seeing his garments in shreds, and bones scattered about the kennel, they would think that it was he who had been devoured.

'There are strange things in this world, Pastourel,' said Jean Couteau, suddenly interrupting the thread of his narrative; 'the *fillou* has courage, although he is a braggart, and I am very sure that if they had placed him face to face with the old wolf, he would have bravely throttled him; well, when I said to him laughing, "it is you that the dogs are now eating!" a cold sweat broke out upon him, and he almost swooned away.'

'That is easily understood,' said Pastourel, in a grave and melancholy tone, 'people with vivid imaginations seem oftentimes to be alarmed at the thought of danger, for they involuntarily picture it is so terrible, that it would frighten those who are most courageous.'

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'Danger is what it is,' replied Jean Couteau, 'it never goes farther than death, whether one is torn by dogs, embowelled by a bear, or killed by a musket ball. Consequently, I do not see how the imagination can add to it.'

'How!' said Pastourel, 'you do not see that you would rather be killed outright with a bullet, than to be torn, for example, piece-meal, by dogs?'

'That depends upon circumstances,' replied Jean Couteau, 'in the first case, a man dies like a beast, while in the other, he has time to say his prayers, and repeat his *mea culpa*. And do you see, Pastourel, when a man is a good catholic, he ought not to wish to die before he has set all in order.'

'You are right,' rejoined Pastourel, gloomily, as he turned aside his head, and gazed at the morsel which he was about to eat: 'and did the trick succeed?'

'*Ma foi*,' said Jean Couteau, 'at one time I was near paying for the baron's calf. I was upon the watch, when I heard the door of the kennel opened; it was Don Jose. I knew him by the terrible cries which he uttered when he missed Galidou and beheld the dogs despatching the carcase. He at once gave the alarm, ran to fetch the baron, and with that the whole castle was in an uproar.

'The devil!' I said to Galidou, 'things are going ill; if they find but a single shred of the calf's hide, they will never take it for the skin of a Christian, and we shall both be discovered." Fortunately, however, the dogs had done their work bravely; and besides, Don Jose had left the gate of the kennel open, so that the hounds had escaped, each carrying his morsel with him. I took good care not to go down and put an end to the feast; I laughed to see the dogs scatter my calf around so greedily. At last I heard the baron's voice; it was necessary to obey, and I soon got the hounds back into the kennel; but the trick had succeeded. The baron was pale as a corpse, his hair stood on end like thorns; he told me to collect the remains of the unhappy Galidou, and to place them in a chest. I did this with such haste and horror that no one had the least suspicion of the truth.

'I never saw the baron in such a state; it was the first time in his life, perhaps that he trembled. That was all well, for it prevented him from distinguishing between a man's leg and a leg of veal.'

'But how were you able to leave the castle in the night?' said Pastourel, whose heart stirred at this bloody narrative.

'Ah, that is a different matter, Pastourel!' replied Jean Couteau. 'I think that the baron was softened, for he directed me to go to the Abbey of St. Barthelmi, and to bring Father Anselmo, that he might inter the remains of the unfortunate Galidou.'

'How say you?'

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'Ha! ha! ha!' rejoined Jean Couteau, laughing boisterously, 'they are going to bury my calf with mass and holy water. I am very glad I am not there; I should burst with laughter! "The poor Galidou! the comely youth!" they will say, with a pitiful air, "to die thus!—how he must have suffered!" And Father Anselmo chanting *De profundis* over my calf—*requiescat in pace* over my calf!—Ha! that is a famous joke! is it not, Pastourel?'

And Couteau laughed till the mountain echoed again.

'It is sacrilege, perhaps,' said the shepherd, in a tone of irony.

These words at once checked Jean Couteau's hilarity, and he replied:

'It was not I who directed him to be buried. I put a calf in a man's place to be devoured; it is not my fault if—'

He paused, and added after a moment's silence:

'If I had thought of that, I would have told Father Anselmo; but now it must be all over. Well, I will confess it.'

Pastourel, who had thus far listened to Jean Couteau with an air of anxious interest, smiled disdainfully, and said:

'Yes, yes, you will do well to do so, although it was the consequence of performing a good action. But tell me how you got Galidou out of the castle.'

'The baron had gone to his chamber to fetch the keys, and and I feared lest he would return himself to open the gate. I was in great trouble, therefore another droll idea came into my mind—no, no,' continued Jean Couteau, shaking his head—'I was wrong again; I did a sinful thing, and Galidou, whom I thought a coward, had more sense than I, for he was afraid when I told him to wrap himself up in a large white sheet, and play the part of his soul.'

Again Pastourel regarded his companion with a scornful air, and the latter resumed, but no longer in the merry tone in which he had commenced his narrative:

'Yes, I had wrapped him in a large white sheet, and placed him erect near the portcullis. When the baron appeared, he was to say, in a hollow voice, like a dead man; "Baron, open thy castle gate; thou mayest keep my body, but thou shalt not have my soul!"

Pastourel could not repress a smile, and said:

'And was the baron terrified at this apparition?'

'Fortunately,' replied Jean Couteau, 'we were not obliged to resort to it. I heard him talking in the court with Don José, who demanded like a madman permission to leave the castle; the baron would not consent, and while he was directing two men to hold him, I stepped up and asked him for the keys, he gave them to me, and away we went. When

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we reached the ford of the torrent, I left the *fillou* to make his way home alone, and went to the abbey where I found Father Anselmo, and said to him—what was it I said to him—that the baron wanted him—that was all, I did not tell him for what; if they are committing sacrilege, it is not my fault.'

'And how did you know that you would find me here?'

'Galidou told me that you were going to look for pasture this morning, and I wanted to see you to consult with you, for the baron will of course find out that Galidou is not dead, and if the *fillou*, who is a babbler, amuses himself by relating the manner in which I got him out of his danger, it is very likely that I may have to take his place, and I should find no one to render me the service which I rendered him. At this present moment, indeed, I believe the baron bitterly repents the misfortune which he thinks has happened, but I am equally sure that he will be furious, when he discovers that he has been deceived, for the cowherd will not find his calf and—'

'Listen, Jean,' said Pastourel, 'no harm will happen to you for what you have done to-day, I promise you. Some one, perhaps, will suffer for it, but it will not be you.'

'Who then will suffer for me?'

'Jean,' replied Pastourel, with an air of melancholy, 'they have given me the reputation of a sorcerer in this district, and God is my witness that I have never practised any spell for which I should fear to appear before His bar, yet—I will not deny it—I have often been warned by some power—I know not what—of that which is about to happen to me.'

'Pastourel,' said Jean Couteau, with reserve and gravity, 'I owe my life to you, and you must confess that I am not forgetful of benefits, but you know also that I have never wished to meddle with your dealings with the devil.'

'You are silly,' replied Pastourel, calmly. 'I have told you that I have never had recourse to magic. But look down upon this meadow; at thirty paces from that fir-tree,—there where a white stone peers out above the grass—well, there, for more than an hour this morning, I have seen myself stretched out with my arms crossed, and my head crushed by a bullet above the left temple. I was dead:'

'What a fancy!' cried Jean Couteau, turning pale.

'It was not a fancy,' replied Pastourel, 'I saw myself as I see you, and it will happen, you may be sure of it.'

'Come, come,' said Jean, who, although more agitated than the shepherd, still endeavoured to encourage him, 'you were sleeping standing, and you have been dreaming of blood and death since last evening.'

'No, no,' replied Pastourel, 'my staff will be near me, my pouch will be under my head. Return to-morrow, and you will see.'

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'I will not return to-morrow' said Jean Couteau, who could with difficulty conceal his terror, 'for I will not leave you.'

'You will leave me,' rejoined Pastourel, mildly, 'you will leave me—it is necessary—something will separate us, you will see.'

Jean Couteau broke out into loud laughter, which was suddenly checked, however, as he observed the sad glance with which Pastourel surveyed him. Still he made another effort to subdue his superstitious terror, in order to combat that which seemed mastering Pastourel, and he said:

'And who the devil do you think would send a bullet through your head? For a bullet does not come of itself, and no one of the inhabitants of la Roque, no, not all of them in a body would dare to venture so high up the mountain, and that is the reason that I directed you to this pasturage.'

'Who will send a bullet through my head, say you?' answered Pastourel, 'I could tell you, for I have seen his face, he came out of the wood yonder, and he looked to see if I did not stir, and then he disappeared.'

Jean Couteau listened to the shepherd with heaving bosom and fixed eyes, as if each instant he expected to behold some supernatural being rise before him.

'You have seen him to-day?'

'Yes, it was he.'

'But why not rid yourself of him then?'

'It is necessary that he should live and I die!'

'Pastourel, kneel down and pray to God, if you have no dealings with Satan. Our Lord will deliver you from these wicked thoughts; for all this is but a vision.'

'Yes, yes, Jean, it is a vision, for I saw what I tell you, and it will happen because it is to be. You men who live in perpetual action, you know not as well as I do, how many things can be seen before they happen. This morning, on this spot, I saw a fawn pass by, and then an eagle; the fawn entered the wood, and the eagle perched upon an oak. Wait a moment, and you will see it bearing the fawn to its eyrie. Stay! stay! hearest thou? there was a cry! look up, the eagle must be passing.'

While Pastourel spoke he kept his eyes fixed upon the earth, but his accent was that of a man who sees the object of which he speaks. Jean directed his eyes mechanically towards heaven, and beheld indeed an eagle darting swiftly onward, bearing a fawn in his talons. The impression which this sight produced upon the bear hunter was so powerful that he started up from the ground, and retreated a few paces.

'Well! well!' said Pastourel, mildly, 'does that surprise you? The eagle needed this fawn to feed its young; it has pursued and taken it, and it was meant to be so. And thus

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Jean, there lives one who needs my blood, that her child may enjoy a wide, free range, and she will compass my death.'

'Hush!' said Jean Couteau, 'you are mad, and you mock me; you saw the eagle fly from the wood, and you pretended to be looking upon the ground.'

'I have no need to raise my eyes to see,' said Pastourel, 'for I feel who it is that comes, and he will soon be here.'

'Who is this then?' exclaimed Jean, with strange terror, and he turned to discover this enemy.

'After all, there is no reason why I should not tell you,' replied Pastourel, 'for all the country will know it, and you will be able neither to save or avenge me. Yes, yes, I must tell you, and you will learn my secret, and that of the murderer. But still, Jean, let them never know that you are informed of it, for in one way or another they will try to get rid of you. Jean! Jean! there is some one,—I see him now—who has proposed to you to slay me!'

Jean Couteau, pale and trembling, replied in a gloomy tone:

'Yes, the Baron de la Roque has promised me two hundred livres if I killed you, and four hundred if I brought you alive into his presence.'

'There is another,' rejoined Pastourel, with his eyes fixed before him, like one who looks through a loophole into an enclosure, and explains what is passing there to another who cannot see it, 'there is another who has proposed to you to slay me, and that within the last twelve hours.'

'It is true,' replied Jean Couteau, whose knees shook beneath him, 'it was Don José.'

'Yes, yes, Don Jose, it is he indeed, and as you have not done it, he will do it himself."

'Don Jose!' exclaimed Jean, 'no, no, it is impossible!'

'You will see, you will see, Jean! I am in possession of his secret. I know that the baroness—stay, he is coming; he is afraid lest I should speak to you, but I do not fear him I will speak. Listen!'

'One day,' said Pastourel to Jean Couteau, 'one day, about five years since, I was on the edge of the precipice of St. Barthelmi. I saw a young man of eighteen years, who seemed to be seeking for some one. He knew that it was I, and I made a sign to him. "You are Pastourel, the sorcerer," he said to me. Alas! Jean, the wicked thought entered my head to take advantage of my evil name, trusting to my innocence, which told me that I did not merit it; for in truth, it does not depend upon me to see or not to see that which appears to me. I divined by the visage of this young man that he was in love, and I said to him:

'"Yes, I am Pastourel, whom you seek that he may furnish you with the means to succeed in your love."

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'The young man was troubled at these words, as if I had told him something wonderful. And still, what could bring a comely youth of eighteen years, to an old shepherd whom he esteemed a sorcerer, unless to speak of his love? Then he told me that he was enamoured of the daughter of the Seigneur de La Bastide, the beautiful Paula, and that she was about to be married to the Baron de la Roque.

'Jean! Jean! there is as much wickedness in an evil counsel, as in an evil action. I hated the baron, who had already begun his persecutions against us shepherds, and I foolishly said to the young man:

'"When you were a child, and you feared lest you should be deprived of a fruit which you longed for, you carried it off, did you not!"

'"Yes, indeed!" he said, "If Paula would have consented, I should not now be here to consult you. I should long since have carried her away from La Bastide."

'"She who says *nay* by the light of day, oftentimes says *yea* in the night."'

'It was not as a sorcerer that you said that,' interrupted Jean.

'No, in truth,' continued Pastourel, 'but it was evil counsel and he followed it. Fifteen days afterward he came to me in despair, saying, "You have rendered me guilty, and have not rendered me happy. To-morrow she weds the baron, for she cannot refuse him without owning the truth, and that would be her death. Counsel me how I may prevent this marriage."

'Hatred is blind, and I counselled him to remain near the baron's person, and wait until some chance should sever the union, since neither he nor she could prevent it. 'The day will come," I said to myself, "when blood will flow in the castle of our persecutors, and some one will fall a victim." But the evil will return upon him who purposed it. I shall be the victim!'

At these words Pastourel seemed to gaze more steadfastly before him; he bent his head, as if listening to a distant sound.

'Listen!' he cried, gloomily, 'he comes! Do you hear him?'

Pastourel, who until now had remained seated upon the ground, suddenly rose, while his dog started up with flashing eyes, bristling hair, and uttering a howl of terror.

'It is he! it is he!' said Pastourel.

Jean, greatly terrified, looked toward the edge of the w ood, and beheld an enormous bear coming toward them. He supposed that Pastourel, more familiar than himself with the silence of the mountain, had heard the approach of the animal, and influenced by his fancy, had taken it for that of a man.

'Well, well,' he cried, 'if that is the fellow who is to bring

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you death, I will answer for your life.' And he advanced courageously toward the bear.

Pastourel, at the sight of the danger to which Jean Couteau was exposing himself, seemed to forget all his presentiments; he urged on his dog against the ferocious animal, and ran himself toward the border of the wood. Jean was now within a few paces of the beast, and the dog was circling around him, uttering short, angry growls. Pastourel hastened to come up with them, and scarcely had he reached the white stone, which he had pointed out, exclaiming, 'let us both at it!—it is a she bear, and we will find its cubs!' when suddenly the sharp report of a musket was heard. Jean turned his head, and beheld Pastourel extended upon the earth, his arms crossed, his staff near him, and his pouch beneath his bleeding head.

At this sight, the superstitious terror which Pastourel's words had excited in his bosom, awoke more powerful than ever in the soul of Jean Couteau; he stood for some moments stupefied, incapable of motion, with his eyes fixed upon the body, which he beheld lying in the attitude which Pastourel had described to him.

His feet seemed rooted to the earth; he fancied himself under the control of that infernal power which had just snatched away his companion; and this emotion would have lasted still longer, perhaps, if the shepherd's dog had not suddenly rushed between Jean Couteau and the body of his master.

At this sight, the hunter started backward, and the dog, after having scented his master, darted furiously upon Jean, and before the latter could place himself in an attitude of defence, he had bitten him twice or thrice severely. Jean at last drew the long *couteau de chasse*, which had given him the name by which he was generally known, and with a single blow laid the dog dead at his master's side.

The necessity of self-defence, had, as it were, dissolved the charm which had rendered the hunter motionless, but it had not effaced the terror with which this sudden and predicted death had inspired him. Scarcely had the dog fallen, when the unhappy Jean took to flight, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, but hurrying onward with that instinct which survives all consciousness, chased by a terror more fearful than the pursuit of the most dangerous enemy.

The fatigue, however, of so long and rapid a race, obliged him at last to pause. The distance at which he now found himself from the scene of that strange event, the sight of a human habitation, for he was already near the castle, permitted him to collect his thoughts for a moment; but the mind of Jean Couteau had not sufficient strength to reason upon what had passed, and he was unable to escape from the

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following dilemma; either Pastourel had felt the approach of his murderer, and it was Don Jose who had slain him, and therefore he was undoubtedly a real sorcerer, or he had been deceived, and then it was the devil who had carried him away.

In either case, the hunter remembered that Father Anselmo was at the castle, and he resolved to seek him out at once, to confess all to him, and place himself under the protection of his prayers, should it cost him the savings of ten year's labour.

It was in this state of mind that Jean, with disordered garments, his face still wearing traces of the deepest alarm, reached the gate of the castle. But before narrating what occurred on his arrival, it is necessary to recount the events which had preceded it.

CHAPTER VII.

We left the baron at the moment, when convinced that Galidou had been devoured by his dogs, he had sent for a priest to inter his supposed remains. We have seen, from the recital of Jean Couteau, how the baron had opposed the departure of Don Jose de Frias. The old seigneur returned to his apartment after having given the keys of the portcullis to his messenger, forgetting, for the first time in his life, perhaps, to lock up the castle with his own hands.

The baroness had remained alone in her chamber; she had long since formed a correct estimate of Don Jose's character. Brave with the bravery common to all men, skilful in the use of arms, loving with that love which is ready to sacrifice a fortune to its object, he was liable to none of those excesses of temerity and of passion, which take by surprise the hearts of women; he was destitute of that firmness and resolution which sways them and commands their respect.

The feelings which Paula felt toward Don Jose were strangely inconsistent; she alternately despised him and loved him, blessed him and cursed him. This man, neither good nor bad, whom she was unable to inspire with a resolution against herself or her husband, caused her to tremble with rage. Again and again, in her hours of despair, she had said to him, 'Leave me! do not heed my tears! leave me, and kill me, or kill him, and remain! I cannot live thus!' And Jose waited calmly for these hours of madness to pass, promising her no hope, no relief from her tortures. Then she despised him, but when her rage was wearied out by the dull irresolution of her lover, she thanked him upon her knees for having turned a deaf ear to her cries, her tears, her imprecations.

But never, perhaps, had the baroness felt such anger, such

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contempt for Don Jose as that which disturbed her bosom when he informed her that Pastourel was in possession of their secret. He had left her, saying, that he would kill the shepherd; but the baroness did not credit him. 'No,' she exclaimed, 'he has endured this fear, this slavery for five years; he has submitted to the thought that another could dispose of his life and of mine. He is the basest of cowards; if I do not save myself, I am lost, for ever lost!'

A woman, with a character like that of the baroness, and with the ideas of the present day, would not have been long in forming her resolution. Suicide would have occurred to her as an easy resource; but the guiltiest sinner, when she believes in a merciful God, who elevates repentance to a level with virtue, dares not commit a crime which robs her of her last hope, and insures her eternal condemnation. Paula did not think of self-destruction; not that she feared death, but death by her own hands. Still, she saw no means to avoid the danger which threatened her; she acted like a prisoner, who, confined in a gloomy dungeon, is certain to perish unless he finds some way of escape; he searches in every direction, groping along the walls and ground for an avenue of flight; and when all hope is exhausted, when despair has taken possession of his soul, if a stone trembles beneath his hand, if a faint light reaches his eye, he rushes thitherward without reflection, without prudence, without inquiring whether he may not increase his peril in seeking to avoid it.

It was thus with Paula; after having sought long, and in vain, to find some way of refuge, without discovering a ray to guide her through the darkness which enveloped her, she grasped at the first hope which dawned upon her. She left her chamber, and after having traversed several gloomy passages, she reached the threshold of the prison in which Barati was confined with the scribe Langlois. She directed the guard to open it, and, having entered, she carefully closed the door behind her.

The councillor and Langlois, who had been for several hours plunged in the deepest obscurity, were so dazzled at the sudden gleam of the light which Paula held in her hand, that at first they did not recognize her. Langlois, who was lying in a corner upon a heap of dirty straw, turned quickly, fell upon his knees, and began to beg for mercy.

The councillor, who was seated upon a wretched joint stool, which he had found by groping about his dungeon, raised his head without leaving his place, and said—

'Does the baron purpose to keep us here long?'

'I do not know the intention of the baron,' replied the baroness; 'but I can tell you mine.'

At this voice Barati rose and saluted the baroness with a courtliness which the most gallant noble might have envied

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in this obscure representative of the *noblesse* of the robe, and replied—

'The intentions, madam, which have led you at this hour to this infected den, cannot be otherwise than benevolent.'

'Whatever they may be, sir,' replied Paula, 'I can impart them to you alone.'

'Madam, this officer of the parliament has been associated with me, to note down all that I may hear as a magistrate, and—'

'Sir councillor,' resumed the baroness, 'I have that to say to you which is entirely foreign to the errand upon which you have been sent. Besides, I have come to ask advice of you rather than to render you a service; but in either case it is necessary that we should be alone.'

'Leave us, master Langlois,' said the councillor.

The latter, who a moment before could have paid any price for the liberty of leaving this damp dungeon, replied in a churlish tone—

'It is my duty to remain near you, worthy councillor. I have not failed to do so when the danger was imminent, and it would be scarcely just to banish me when a chance of safety is offered.'

'Your first duty is to obey me.'

'And where do you wish me to go?' said Langlois.

The baroness opened the door, and said to the guard:

'I place this man in your keeping; do not let him stir from this door until I have left the prison.'

Langlois, wavering between the fear of throwing an obstacle in the way of an arrangement which might free him from the baron's clutches, and the suspicion that the councillor might be liberated alone by means of some secret gate in the prison, hesitated.

'Councillor Barati,' he said at last, 'I obey; but it is your duty to provide for my protection as it is mine to render you obedience.'

'Go, sir, go!' said Barati; 'I know my duties—try to remember yours.'

Langlois left the prison, and the baroness remained with Barati.

'Well, madam?' said the councillor.

A deep sigh swelled the bosom of the baroness, and as if she feared to exhaust her courage by preliminary explanations, she said quickly—

'Councillor Barati, you can save me.'

'Save you, madam?'

'The law, the parliament, you, some one has the power to free me from the life to which I am here condemned—from a life passed amid bloodshed and violence! You have seen the

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Baron de la Roque; listen now to what has just occurred in the castle.'

Then, in a few words, and with an energy inspired by the horror which she felt, and by the wish to interest Barati in her behalf, she related the unhappy fate of Galidou, and then added—

'Must I live here a helpless witness of such atrocities until the day arrives when I in my turn shall become the victim?'

Barati was far from expecting such an appeal on the part of the baroness. Every feeling of humanity and generosity prompted him to engage in the defence of an unhappy woman who was exposed to incessant danger; but conscious of his inability to aid her in his capacity of a magistrate, he said—

'The law, madam, and consequently parliament, cannot assist you, except you have personal grievances to complain of against the Baron de la Roque. And as to myself, I am not now in a position to render my services effectual.'

'Councillor Barati,' replied Paula, 'I can open the gates of this castle, and thus perhaps save your life, but then I must leave it with you; you must bear me away as you would a prisoner whom you found in a haunt of brigands, into whose hands you had fallen.'

'Your position is terrible, madam,' said Barati, 'and every honest heart must sigh over it; but the law offers no means to liberate you.'

'So, then,' said the baroness, 'you, a magistrate, may foresee a crime, and yet you cannot prevent it when everything combines to convince you that it is meditated.'

Barati reflected: he was forcibly impressed with the thought that, with a man of the baron's character, a moment of intoxication or of anger might impel him to the crime of murder, and after a moment's silence, he replied—

'Madam, that which has passed this night may bring about results which may protect you far better than I can, but it is necessary to await them.'

'Await them! here, doubtless?' said Paula, in a bitter tone, and with an air of keen vexation. 'Oh, sir, when I beheld the courage with which you braved the baron's fury, I expected to find in you a man, who would not hesitate to liberate a woman from a condition so desperate as mine.'

'Madam,' replied Barati sternly, 'a man is always courageous in the fulfilment of his duty. Permit the officer of parliament who has just left us, to re-enter this dungeon, in which I am a prisoner, and I will, in his presence, receive the complaint which you would address to me against the Baron de la Roque, and if I think that you are exposed to danger by a longer residence in this castle, I will summon him to set you at liberty, that you may retire into a convent, there to

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await the issue of a suit which you will commence against him. But as to assisting you in escaping from the abode of your husband, in this, madam, you cannot count upon me.'

"In truth, sir,' said the baroness with increased asperity, 'your aid will be very efficacious to me, when you leave me in the power of the Baron de la Roque, after I have entered a complaint against him. For do you suppose he would heed your summons?'

'Madam, the king himself cannot prevent an assassin from slaying a man who walks peaceably upon the high road, but woe to him who should brave his power, or that of the parliament, when once admonished that you are under his protection.'

'It seems to me, sir,' replied Paula, tranquilly, 'that you yourself are an example of the respect in which the baron holds this power.'

'Who knows, madam? Night brings counsel, and the baron already, perhaps, repents of his conduct towards me,' said Barati ironically.

'In that case, sir, you will permit me to wait for this proof of the fear with which parliament can inspire the baron, and will seek in submission and silence a refuge against the ills with which I am incessantly menanced.'

'As you think best, madam,' replied Barati coldly. 'Yet permit me to assure you that if I had entered this castle under any other title than that of a magistrate, you would not in vain have claimed my aid to assist your flight; but that which my honour as a gentleman would then have enjoined upon me, is forbidden by the office with which I am invested.'

The baroness frowned, and glancing upon Barati, with an indignant air, she replied, proudly:

'It is the protection of the magistrate alone, which I demand; it does not become the Baroness de la Roque to accept any other

'A word can insure it to you, madam. Tell me formally, and for reasons that you can reveal to me without danger, that you wish to be liberated from the authority of your husband, and I will enforce your demand.'

'The baroness hesitated, then impelled with some secret thought, answered quickly:

'Recall this man, and receive my complaint.'

Langlois was recalled, and the baroness without complaining personally against the Baron de la Roque, declared that it was impossible for her to live in a house which was the daily scene of occurrences similar to those which we have recounted to our readers. She mentioned a number, the results of which though less frightful in appearance, were much more melancholy in reality. Thus, unhappy peasants had been confined

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in damp dungeons without any nourishment but mouldy bread and water; others had been whipped, others still more severely injured; in fine, there was enough to justify the demand of the baroness in the eyes of any tribunal. Langlois wrote, while Paula rehearsed these facts with an agitation which Barati attributed to her alarm. When she had ended, the councillor presented the complaint for her signature, which last formality she executed with a desperate effort, then left the prison, saying, as she went:

'Now, sir, I am under your safeguard, and that which you have witnessed in this castle should insure me protection, whatever may be the pretexts which the Baron de la Roque may invent to punish me.'

Her last words surprised Barati; it was true, the baroness had reason to believe that her husband might resolve to punish her for the complaint which she had entered against him, but this complaint could not be called a pretext, and the truth, although still indistinct, rose for a moment before the councillor. Langlois interrupted his reflections.

'This is a precious piece of evidence against the baron, he said.

'Perhaps,' rejoined Barati, 'perhaps this evidence alone will not suffice to convict him, but the crime which has been committed here this night cannot be punished too severely.'

'Is it true,' replied Langlois, turning pale—'the story which the guard has just told me? that that young man has been devoured by the baron's dogs.'

'Madam de la Roque has related to me also, and the tumult which we heard confirms it.'

'Lord of heaven!' said Langlois, trembling in every limb: 'If the like should happen to us! for the baron is like a mad wolf to-night. The guard told me that he had arrested the young page who met us at the torrent, and had thrown him into prison, because he insisted upon leaving the castle.'

'He feared doubtless lest he might inform against him,' said Barati, who considered this arrest as confirming the suspicion which he had conceived; he then added: 'Langlois, did you notice the shepherd who was waiting for us at the passage of the Tannel, and the tone in which he recommended the safety of his master's son to Don José de Frias?'

'Yes, in truth,' said the latter, 'one would have thought that the peasant had a right to command the comte.'

Barati reflected for a while, and then said:

'Well, master Langlois, whatever may happen, do not speak of the complaint we have just received, until we have left the castle.'

'Never fear,' replied Langlois, quickly, 'for if the baron knew we were in possession of the deposition, and that I was acquainted with its contents, he would make us pass between

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the jaws of his dogs, rather than suffer it to reach parliament.'

'Be silent upon the subject until I think best to speak of it,' said Barati.

It is unnecessary to relate in this place the various reasons which confirmed the councillor in the belief that the complaint of the baroness was a precaution which she took against the future, rather than a reparation which she demanded for the past.

The remainder of the night passed away in quietness.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was after daybreak when the guard opened the door of the prison in which Barati and Langlois were confined.

They were conducted into the same hall in which they had been received on the preceding evening. The same arrangements had been made; the baroness was present, and a priest was seated near her.

When Barati entered, the baron rose, and said:

'A chair for the councillor Barati.'

An arm-chair was at once brought for him.

'Take your place, sir,' said the baron to Langlois, 'and write what you are about to hear, as is your duty.'

Barati signed to Langlois to obey, and he was upon the point of taking up the word himself, when Baron de la Roque prevented him by a gesture replete with dignity. The aspect of the old seigneur was completely changed; his eyes had lost their fire, and the savage smile which gave so cruel an expression to his face had disappeared.

'Listen, sir,' he said, 'listen, and you, sir, write down my words.'

He then added, like a man who has carefully reflected upon the meaning and the expression of what he is about to say:

'I, Adrien, Baron de la Roque, uninfluenced by fear or favour, acknowledge the following facts:—'

These facts were but a repetition of that which had occurred on the preceding evening, from the time of Barati's arrest to the supposed death of Galidou. This recital, delivered with great calmness, contained not a single expression which could palliate the baron's misdeeds, and concluded with the following words:

'I make this voluntary declaration because it pleases me to do so, and from my regret at the misfortune which has occurred, without being impelled by any fear of the punishment which the parliament may choose to inflict upon me. And to convince all that I do not seek to save myself by any idle subterfuge, I maintain as right and lawful all that I have done up to this day, against the boors who have infringed

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upon my domain; I considered it as just, and I in no wise deny it, and I am ready to prove that in nothing have I transgressed the limits of that authority which belongs to my rank. So well am I convinced of this, that I am willing, in order that strict justice may be meted out to all, to suffer each one who may feel aggrieved to place their complaints in the hands of the sieur Barati; making known to all here present, as has been made known to those without, that this castle will remain open during the entire day, and that all and each shall be at liberty to come and go, whatever he may have to say, or has already said against me.'

Barati had listened to the baron with an air of rigid imperturbability, while at the same time he closely scrutinized Paula, who had started involuntarily on hearing that the baron had thrown open the castle to all complainants from without. Under these circumstances she felt convinced that Pastourel, on learning the fate of Galidou, would appear to avenge the young man, and to disclose the secret of her shame. She made a movement to rise when the baron had ended, but the sound of Barati's voice checked her.

'Not only,' he said, 'can those safely enter where sits the commissioned authority of the parliament, but those who would not speak of their own will are bound to answer to my queries.

A smile played about the baron's lips, and he said, turning to Barati:—

'You defended the honour of the robe courageously last evening, and to day you would save that of legal forms. It is well: do as you think fit.'

'Among those whose evidence I wish to obtain, baron,' resumed the councillor, 'two men are wanting here, and two who could, perhaps, give me the surest information—Don José and a man whom I have heard called Jean Couteau.'

'Don Jose will be brought before you, sir; I have detained him prisoner, because if I had suffered him to leave the castle, as he wished, it might have been thought that I feared his disclosures. As to Jean Couteau, I know not why he has not yet returned. I sent him, it is true, to seek the venerable Father Anselmo, for I wish that an expiatory mass may be celebrated in this castle, for him who has been the victim of my rashness; but he will return, sir, he will return. Let Don Jose be brought in,' added the baron. 'In the meantime let those who wish to speak, come forward: we have no time to lose.'

'True, my lord,' said one of the menials in a voice of terror, 'for the peasants can be seen mounting the castle-hill, as if they were preparing to assault it.'

The baroness fell back upon her chair at the thought that

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Pastourel might be among these peasants. At the same moment Barati said, in a loud voice:—

'Come forward, you who have just spoken! Has the Baron de la Roque to your knowledge at any time attacked the shepherds of the mountain?'

'You can answer,' said the baron.

'Sir councillor,' said the menial, 'I have nothing to say against my master.'

'Nor I! nor I!' repeated almost all present.

The baroness was evidently agitated by a fearful struggle. Barati made another attempt to interrogate some of the baron's attendants, but he received the same answer from all, and he resumed:

'Why is not Don Jose brought in before me? for I see no one else from whom I can require an answer.'

A man now appeared at the door of the hall, and said to the baron:

'My lord, the shepherds refuse to enter the castle without a safe conduct written in your own hand.'

The baron took the pen, wrote a few words, and gave the open paper to the man, saying:

'Let them enter without fear. Whatever they may say against me, they may pass out unhindered.'

Paula seemed at this moment ready to swoon; in her imagination she saw Pastourel standing face to face with Don Jose, and revealing before all present the secret which the imprudent youth had disclosed to him. She appeared to have lost all power of speech and of motion, when the sound of the baron's voice gave her sufficient strength to address him, as he said, after a long silence:

'Well, has Don Jose or the peasants arrived?'

'Before them, or before Don Jose,' said the baroness, rising, pale as death, 'there is some one to be heard.'

'Who?' said the baron.

'Myself,' replied Paula, sinking back upon her chair. 'Councillor Barati, you have received my complaint; read it.'

The baron's face was for a moment agitated by the most contradictory emotions. To an air of lively astonishment succeeded an expression of savage anger:

'You?' he said to Paula, 'you?'

'I!' replied Paula.

Then the sadness of despair fell upon the baron, and he muttered gloomily:

'*It was true, then!* Read, sir,' he added to Barati, in a hollow voice.

Barati made a sign to Langlois to read the writing which he had drawn up in the dungeon. The baron remarked it and turning to Barati, he added bitterly, but with true dignity:

'Read it yourself, sir; it needs the grave and reverend voice

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of a man like you to give me strength to listen to what I am about to hear.'

Still the baron seemed to distrust his firmness, for he placed both elbows upon the table, and concealed his face in his hands. The baroness, with eyes fastened upon the ground and with drooping head, appeared to have exhausted all her courage in the appeal which she had made to Barati. If she had been able, she would have closed her ears to the sound of her voice. Profound silence reigned in the hall, and Barati commenced the reading of Paula's complaint.

The baron seemed nailed to his chair, such was the motionless rigidity of his position. His fingers alone, clutched against his forehead, pressed it, as if they would bury themselves deep in his brain.

During the reading, several shepherds had entered silently, and when Barati had concluded, and had returned the writing to Langlois, who folded and placed it carefully beneath his doublet, the baron raising his head, beheld them standing before him. Paula, with her haggard eyes fastened upon the door, waited in vain for the entrance of her accuser. The baron turned towards her, and said:

'Madam—'

She rose hastily, trembling and bewildered.

'Madam,' resumed the baron, in a calm voice, 'the gates of the castle are open, and will remain so during the whole day. Go!'

The baroness bent her head, and said quickly to the priest who sat near her—

'Support me, father, support me!'

She had tottered a few paces toward the door, when Jean Couteau rushed wild and disordered into the hall. All present were startled at his paleness, and the baroness stopped at the first word that broke from his lips.

'Don Jose,' he cried; 'where is Don Jose?'

'We have been long waiting for him,' said the baron.

'My lord,' cried one of the menials, 'we have looked in vain in his prison, and called after him throughout the castle—he is not here.'

'Don Jose,' cried a scornful voice from the midst of the peasants, 'Don Jose was at break of day in the neighbourhood of the mountain of Saint Barthelmi.'

The Baron seemed strangely agitated.

'*It was true, then*!' he murmured.

'In that case,' exclaimed Jean Couteau, with the gloomy air of a man who is in a kind of delirium, 'the shepherd was right; he saw him, indeed. Yes, yes, Don Jose has killed Pastourel!'

The cry uttered by the baroness at hearing these words, would doubtless have attracted general notice, and given rise

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to strange comments upon the extraordinary emotion excited by this news, but the attention of all present was at once diverted from Paula by an incident which filled the inmates of the castle with the greatest astonishment.

'He has killed Pastourel!' cried the voice which had spoken before. 'In that case, no terms! War, war between us and thine, Baron de la Roque!'

The speaker was Galidou, who now advanced so as to be seen by all present. The baron remained for a moment motionless, with his eyes fixed upon him whom he supposed to be a phantom, then he muttered gloomily:

It was true!'

Barati himself, although he had heard the cry of the baroness at the tidings of Pastourel's death, was not the less surprised at the supposed apparition. He soon, however, resumed his calmness, and said to Galidou:

'What means this, and how is it that you were thought dead?'

'I will explain it,' said Jean Couteau.

He then related the affair as it occurred, and at the same time recounted how he had owed his life to Pastourel, and how he had sworn to serve him.

'Ha!' said the baron, whose vexation at having played a ridiculous part banished for a moment the peaceable and equitable motives by which he had been so strongly swayed, 'you have betrayed me then, and you are not the only one, perhaps, for Don Jose, whom they accuse of having slain Pastourel, wished likewise to save the life of this boor.'

'Did he wish to save him?' said Jean Couteau, gazing at the baroness, who at these words had fallen as if lifeless upon a chair near the door.

'Yes,' said the baron, 'he did, and so warmly that I found him last night in my wife's chamber, imploring her to aid him in protecting the life of this wretch.'

Jean Couteau gazed once more at the baroness, and muttered:

'And you, madam, did you wish to save him?'

'Yes, yes,' she said, as if these were the last words which would pass her lips.

Jean Couteau bent his head, and at the moment when all present expected some disclosure on his part, he retired, muttering:

'Then I have nothing more to say."

He turned to leave the hall.

'Stop that knave!' cried the baron. 'You have accused Don Jose of the murder of Pastourel. Did you see him commit the deed?'

'No.'

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'Have you been told so?'

'No.'

'You have supposed it?'

'No.'

'He had reasons, then, of which you are aware, to wish for the death of this man?'

Jean Couteau, with his head bent upon his bosom, glanced now to the right, now to the left. At last, summoning all his resolution, he said:

'There is but one man here to whom I can speak; it is Father Anselmo, for I have need of the absolution of a priest for what I have seen and heard.'

'Go,' said Barati: 'go!'

'I will await you in the confessional of the chapel,' said Father Anselmo.

'After me, father, after me!' said Paula, in a whisper, and she hurried from the apartment.

The baron had resumed his former position, with his elbows upon the table, and his face buried in his hands.

'Does it please you, Baron de la Roque,' said Barati, mildly, 'that I should receive the depositions of these peasants in your presence?'

'Do your duty, sir,' said the baron.

'It does not oblige me to compel you to listen to things which might irritate you at a time when you seem already to be suffering under misfortune.'

'Councillor Barati,' replied the baron, raising his head with a proud air, 'it is better that I should hear the crimes which I have committed, in order to be persuaded that I have deserved the hatred of her who has just left us. You can speak—all of you—for I have done you some mischief; but she! she!'

He dropped his head in his hands again, and tears were seen escaping between his fingers, which were tightly pressed against his forehead.

The depositions were now taken, and all referred to facts similar to those of which we have spoken at the beginning of the scene; all ended by an appraisal in money of the injuries in which each one declared he had suffered.

At each item of evidence the councillor said to the baron:

'Have you anything to advance against this?'

'Nothing,' replied the baron.

He inquired, repeatedly, however, if Don Jose had re-appeared; the answer was invariably in the negative, and each time he resumed his position, with his elbows upon the table, and his head buried in his hands.

Then, when all was finished, and a great part of the morning had been employed in this labour, Barati turned to the old seigneur, and said, with a mildness which formed a

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striking contrast with the sternness which he had displayed on the preceding evening:

'My lord baron, here is the report which I am to communicate to parliament; it cannot be but that you have some observations to make.'

The baron raised his head; a death-like paleness was spread over his visage.

'Counsellor Barati,' he said, 'I think I have sufficiently understood the complaints of these worthy people, to see that their demands against me are simply pecuniary. To how much do they amount?'

'To a hundred and twenty thousand livres.'

'They may share among them all the domains that I possess in this province; they are worth about that sum. I am ready to resign them.'

A prolonged murmur of astonishment ran through the assembly.

'You are signing your ruin,' said Barati.

'What matters it?' replied the Baron de la Roque.

He took up a pen, wrote a few lines, and reached them to Barati.

'Will it suffice?' he said.

The peasants gazed at each other with an air of stupefaction. The baron turned towards his dependants, and said:

'As to you, you shall receive a year's wages out of the money which still remains in my hands. Is that enough?'

'It is too much, my lord,' said a few voices.

The baron rose, and was about to leave the apartment, when Jean Couteau entered, leading Paula's daughter by the hand.

'My lord,' he said, 'I was leaving the castle, when I found this child weeping in the court.'

'Charlotte!' exclaimed the baron, with singular emotion.

'Mamma would not take me with her,' said the child.

'Well,' said the baron, 'will you remain with me?'

'Oh, yes!' she cried.

'Councillor Barati,' exclaimed the old seigneur, 'restore me that writing! I had forgotten my daughter, sir.'

An old man, who held the deed in his hands, stepped forward, and tore it in pieces.

'My lord baron,' he said, 'the poor peasant who has but little faith in justice, demands much to obtain a little. You owe us forty thousand livres—that is all.'

'You shall have them, my honest friends, you shall have them.'

'Come, come,' said the old man, who was no other than Gali, 'we have nothing more to do here.'

All now left the apartment, with the exception of the baron, Barati, Jean Couteau, and Langlois.

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CHAPTER IX.

After the peasants had left the chamber, the baron turned to Jean Couteau, and said:

'And you, Jean Couteau, will you also quit the castle?'

'Not now, my lord, if you still accept my services.'

'I will,' replied the baron, 'on condition that you tell me the truth concerning Don Jose.'

'Pastourel is dead, my lord, and he alone could tell you why Don Jose had reason to wish his death.'

'Leave us then,' said the baron,' 'and take this child with you. Councillor Barati, will you not remain alone with me? It is no longer the magistrate, but the man of honour, with whom I wish to consult.'

'Will the promise which you have just given hold good, baron? Am I to consider the business which brought me here as arranged between you and those who have addressed their complaints to the parliament?'

'You alone doubt of it, sir,' replied the baron, 'yet from the confidence with which these very persons who look upon me as an enemy, have entered my castle, when I told them they had nothing to fear, you might judge that I have taught those who know me never to distrust my word. Still, if it yet remains for you to avenge the outrage which I have committed against the parliament in your person, and—'

'I voluntarily entered your castle,' said Barati, 'those who followed me hither came at my express and reiterated orders,' he added, glancing at Langlois, 'and if the reception I met with here, was not in the outset such as I have since found it, no one has the right to complain, if I am satisfied. Master Langlois, you can retire.'

Langlois arose and left the apartment, but the base and servile fear, which, until now, had dwelt upon his face, gave place to an expression of savage hate, and a glance of menace, which included both Barati and the baron, flashed from his malignant eyes. Barati did not fail to observe it, but he scorned to manifest the slightest fear of a man like Langlois. The baron followed him with a thoughtful glance, and seemed to have forgotten that he had solicited an interview, when Barati aroused him from his reverie, by saying:

'Seigneur de la Roque, I am listening.'

'Councillor Barati, after the scene which you witnessed in this hall last evening, after my obstinate resistance to the admonitions of the parliament, after all the acts of persecution which you heard recited, you must have been greatly surprised at the change which has taken place in my purpose and my views.'

'Since you approach this subject, sir baron, I will not

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conceal from you that I have not yet recovered from my astonishment.'

'This astonishment will be still greater when I tell you the cause of this change. Look me in the face, councillor Barati! Have I the air of a man likely to be terrified by nursery tales? And still, sir, it was something similar which induced me to act as I have done; it was a dream, a vision, an apparition from the tomb which dictated my conduct.'

The councillor gazed upon the baron with extreme surprise and the latter continued:

'I am in possession of all my senses, and that which I have just done must convince you that something most strange must have occurred to overcome in a few hours the resistance which I have so long maintained against the claims of these new manufacturers of the mountain—a resistance which I have made a point of honour.'

'I am listening to you, baron de la Roque,' replied the councillor, 'and I beg you to believe that I respect the means by which God brings back those who have strayed from the path of duty.'

'Is it God,' said the baron, in a tone of gloom, 'or is it hell that has sent the apparition? I cannot say, but I ought to relate it to you, for you played your part in the scene.'

'I!' said the councillor.

'You or your phantom, I know not which; but I will tell you what I have seen, seen clearly with open eyes, sound senses and calm judgment.'

'Relate it then, baron,' replied the councillor, while he tried to repress a smile, for he remembered the means to which the baron had resorted in order to inflame his anger, and he imagined that a remnant of intoxication blended with strange emotions, which must have disturbed him upon hearing of the fate of Galidou, had produced dreams, which in his alarm he had viewed as realities.'

'You know what occurred,' resumed the baron, 'up to the moment when I despatched Jean Couteau in search of Father Anselmo, and when I arrested Don José.

'I returned to the castle, and, as usual, locked myself in my chamber. I undressed and threw myself upon my bed, but I could not sleep, the image of Galidou, torn in pieces by my dogs, haunted me incessantly. Suddenly I heard a strange noise, as if some one was trying to force open the door of my chamber, and I half rose, and cried, "who is there?" No voice replied, but at the same moment I felt myself seized and thrown back upon my bed. I was then bound upon it, and a covering was thrown about my head to stifle my cries, and I heard the following words, distinctly uttered in my ear: "*Resistance is vain against the messengers of God.*"

'I am not a man to be frightened at so slight a matter, sir

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councillor, and I resolved to keep quiet, so as to observe what passed around me. Besides, those who had been enabled to find their way thus into my chamber, could have slain me if such had been their purpose, and although I did not know what they were about to do, yet I supposed it necessary to obey. My suspense was but short. After a few moments of profound silence, I felt the covering removed from my face, and beheld my chamber brightly illuminated.'

The councillor was unable to repress a smile, but the baron continued in a dry tone:

'I am neither a child nor a coward, sir; that which I tell you is pure truth; I was not thrown backward upon my bed by a force which I could not comprehend; they were the hands of men which grasped me, they were real hands which held me; and that dazzling light was no will-o'-the-wisp; it was caused by a number of tapers which were fastened to the various articles of furniture in my chamber. Four men with long cutlasses stood at my bedside, two on either hand: their faces were masked, and I beheld nought but the gleaming of their eyes fixed upon me, as if to watch for the slightest attempt on my part to call for aid or to resist.'

The councillor assumed a more serious air at hearing these circumstantial details, which proved that the man had seen and observed with considerable calmness, and he made a sign to the baron, as if to assure him of the interest which he took in his narrative. The baron continued:

'These circumstances, sir, satisfied me that I was in the hands of human beings, and I resolved to watch their every action, and to listen carefully to every word which fell from their lips.

'After having closely examined the four masked men who stood over me with their cutlasses, I turned my eyes from them, and beheld in front of me three others, seated at a table, like judges. Before each stood a torch, so that the brightness of the light, flashing between them and me, prevented me from recognizing their features. It seemed as if they divined my wish, for the first—commencing upon my left hand—(I observed everything with great accuracy)—the first, I say, took his torch, and holding it near his face, said to me, in a hollow voice:

'"Dost thou recognise me?"

'It was Don Jose, his face pale and rigid, like that of a corpse. The one at the other extremity did the same, and this time I was unable to repress a cry of terror, as I beheld Galidou, pale as Don Jose, but with a long stain of blood upon his forehead. Do not forget, sir,' said the baron, 'that I thought that he had perished miserably.'

'Neither forget,' said the councillor, 'that he was at liberty, and Don Jose also, and that with an adroit trick—'

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'Were you, then, at liberty also, sir councillor?' said the baron, 'for he who was in the middle, having risen and displayed his features in the same wise, I recognised you, pale like the others, with a face livid and motionless; and you said, with that menacing voice which echoed through this hall last evening:

'"Baron, thy three prisoners are here to sit in judgment upon thee!"'

The baron spoke with such an air of conviction; he appeared so little affected by the terror which that vision would naturally have produced upon him, that Barati was upon the point of yielding to a feeling of superstitious fear, but blushing at the thought of evincing more emotion at the bare recital than the baron seemed to have felt at the actual apparition, he said:

'Baron, it is not astonishing that after what had taken place, you gave to these fantastic shadows the images of those whom you had destined to death, perhaps.'

The Baron de la Roque turned up the sleeves of his coat, and showing the councillor his bruised and discoloured wrists, he replied, with some anger:

'They are not the shadows of cords which can thus lacerate the limbs of man; my imagination has not produced these deep scars which you behold; it gave to none of those forms the faces that I beheld; they were realities.'

'And you examined them carefully?' said Barati, in undisguised astonishment.

'As well as I could in the position in which I lay, for each one having resumed his seat, and placed his torch before him, the rays of light covered them, as it were, with a luminous veil, which my eyes could only pierce when, by chance, they leaned to the right or to the left; but it was because I looked upon this arrangement as a precaution to prevent me from scanning their features, that I seized each opportunity to observe them. Every time that I beheld them, I recognised the same faces, rigid, pallid, and presenting the aspect of death.'

While the councillor listened, the expression of the features changed alternately from astonishment to incredulity, as by turns the singularity of the baron's recital impressed him, or as his reason convinced him that it was the dream of a drunken man. The baron comprehended what was passing in Barati's mind, and added quickly:

'I tell you once more, master councillor, I am not a child to be terrified by will o' the wisps or painted puppets, and as I am sure that I was not duped by my imagination, I could, as well as you, find a probable explanation of these resemblances, if there were not powerful reasons, which induce me to look upon this scene as something supernatural.'

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'It may be so, baron,' replied the councillor, 'and when you have told me the rest—'

'The rest, sir, the rest, will alarm you more than me, perhaps,' replied the old seigneur, bitterly. 'My judges had resumed their places, as I have told you, and he who wore your face, began and said: "Baron de la Roque, thou hast endeavoured to resist the orders of the parliament, and the parliament has sent me to judge thee, not only for the crimes which thou hast committed before the eyes of men, but for those which thou dost think forever buried in the vaults of this castle."'

The councillor lent a more attentive ear, stupified to see the baron, whom he still supposed to be suffering from a species of delirium, ready to reveal those crimes for which he must necessarily call him to an account.

The baron continued:

'I grant that these words alarmed me, and I felt my courage fast leaving me when the phantom judge resumed: "Dost thou remember the night when the Comte de Frias came with a valise filled with gold and jewelry, to ask an asylum of thee? Thou didst grant it eagerly, and on the morrow, when his young son, then scarcely ten years of age, awoke, thou didst say to him, that his father had been obliged to leave the castle in the night, and that he had left him in thy keeping. The boy believed thee, and afterward thou didst inform him that his father had sailed for the Indies, and didst show him a ring set with diamonds, which he sent thee to be given to Don Jose, and the boy who had often seen this ring upon his father's finger, believed that still, and it is now near fifteen years that he whom thou dost call thy ward, has been waiting for the arrival of his father, whose corpse is still in the dark dungeons into which thou didst hurl it, and which thou hast not since dared to enter."'

'Baron, baron!' cried the councillor, rising quickly, 'is this true? is it true?'

The baron signed to him to resume his seat, and rejoined, without appearing to be moved by the councillor's violent indignation:

'Yes, sir, it is true. On that day poverty was a guest in my house, and on the morrow I was to repay to the Comte de Labastide the sum of ten thousand livres. To fail in the payment of a debt to a usurer or a merchant, disturbs one but little, for these people have the law and the bailiffs on their side; but to be unable to restore a sum, borrowed from a gentleman upon the word of a gentleman—it was the loss of my honour, and I could not suffer that. It must have been the devil, sir, who sent the Comte de Frias to La Roque that very evening, for it was not his intention; he was returning

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from Toulouse to Spain, and it was the fatigue of his young son, which compelled him to stop at my castle.'

'And do you dare to make this disclosure to me, sir baron?' said Barati sternly.

'I supposed I was speaking to a man of honour,' said the baron in a tone of raillery, 'for I was careful to ask you if the office of magistrate was ended.'

'It is ended, sir,' replied Barati, 'and as a member of parliament, I will forget what you have now told me, but I warn you that I am unwilling, even as a private man, to hear the recital of these visions, engendered by your remorse.'

Barati rose to leave the apartment, but at the same moment the Baron de la Roque said to him:

'You would perhaps listen more attentively, sir, if instead of speaking of a crime, committed fifteen years ago, I should speak to you of one committed at a distance of twenty-five, when a young girl, wrapped in a mantle, entered by night the house of an innkeeper, named Vergnes, who dwelt in the suburbs of Toulouse, and deposited there a new-born infant, which she brought in an osier cradle.'

'Baron! baron! what mean you! It is not true! they have lied!'

'Who have lied, sir?' replied the baron, with a smile of scorn, 'these visions engendered by my remorse?'

Barati fell backward upon a chair in a state of frightful agitation, and but for the calm visage of the baron, who gazed upon him with a cruel smile, he would have thought himself the sport of a dream.

'They told me truly,' resumed the Baron de la Roque, 'that these words would silence the arrogance, beneath which you have for five and twenty years concealed the crime which you then committed.'

Barati cast a wild glance around the apartment, and then directed it toward the baron with such fury that the latter added:

'Councillor Barati, there is no way to rid yourself of me. I am armed.' he continued, drawing forth a pistol, 'you are not. Besides, my menials would enter at the first cry.'

'And can no one hear us?' said Barati in a low voice.

'Who knows, sir, if those who have revealed this secret to me, do not hear all that is said in all places? For they know of Don Jose's flight, they told me that Galidou was saved, and they repeated word for word the complaint of Paula.'

'And still, sir, your surprise was great when you heard these things?'

'It was not at hearing them, sir, that I was surprised, but at beholding fulfilled at that hour, word for word, that which had been foretold to me, as at this moment the prediction is fulfilled that the mention of the night of the 20th

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of November, 1683, would render you more humble and attentive.'

'Finish then, sir,' replied Barati, with a gloomy and troubled voice; 'finish, for they must have told you other things.'

'Yes, sir,' resumed the baron, 'after having recalled to me the crime—I mean my own—the spectre who wore your visage, continued: "We know," he said, "your project to dispose of me." Then he who wore the visage of Don Jose, added: "and it was to me that you would have entrusted the commission of this crime."'

'Was it true, sir?' said Barati in amazement.

'It was true, sir,' replied the baron, 'it seems that not a single word was uttered last night in this castle, which was not heard by these envoys of hell. What is there wonderful in that, when they are so well acquainted with things which we thought buried in night, and in the oblivion of the tomb.'

'And so, sir,' replied Barati, who had somewhat recovered from his surprise, 'it is to the intervention of these supernatural beings that I owe my safety?'

'Jose had refused, sir, to obey my orders; and although he afterwards consented to rid me of you, upon the condition that I would save Galidou, I am convinced he would not have kept his promise.'

A heavy sigh broke from the councillor's bosom, and he said in a hollow voice:

'This passes belief; it is enough to turn one's brain.'

'This is not all, councillor Barati. If I testified no surprise on hearing of the death of Pastourel, it was because no expression, no emotion could suffice to paint my astonishment, for I already knew of it.'

'Was it Don Jose who killed Pastourel?' said Barati, with an air of burning curiosity.

'He who wore his visage said to me, "I will slay Pastourel, because he knows what he should not know." But he who said this, was no more young Frias, than he who wore your face was you, councillor Barati.'

'In truth, in truth,' muttered Barati, utterly bewildered by what he had heard, 'nothing proves that it was Don Jose. But, baron, did they tell you the secret which was to lead to the death of Pastourel?'

The baron was agitated at this question; his face became pale and anxious, and he replied:

'I enquired after it, and do you know what he, who wore the features of Galidou, answered: "If the councillor Barati will tell you why he committed the crime which we have revealed, you shall know why Pastourel must die."'

'Oh, spectres of hell!' said Barati, with a fury which his

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calm features seemed incapable of expressing, 'they know all!'

He then leaned toward the baron, with flashing eyes and hands convulsively agitated, and said in a low voice:

'And have they told you nothing more?'

'Nothing,' replied the baron. 'But you,' he added, gazing earnestly at Barati, 'will you not tell me this secret?'

Barati did not at once reply; he lowered his eyes, as if to retire within himself and to take secret council of his own bosom; then he cried with energy:

'Never, sir, never!'

The baron smiled bitterly, and said:

'Yes, yes, they warned me that you would refuse, but they told me also that the day would come when your lips would be unclosed.'

'Never, sir, never!' repeated Barati, violently.

'The day when this castle falls into the hands of the parliament.'

'How so?' said Barati.

'Yes, sir councillor, on the day when the inquest which you have directed against me, shall have thrown open this castle to the agents of the parliament, your secret will be divulged: and this morning, if you had not accepted the reparation which I offered to the inhabitants of this district, my crime and yours would both have been brought to light.—But it is time to end, sir,' added the baron, to whom this scene seemed to become more and more painful. 'The conduct that I have pursued this morning, has been traced out to me step by step. If you had not responded to it voluntarily, I was in possession of the means to compel you, by placing in your hands this billet.'

Barati took it, and read the following words:

'He who opposes the reparation of another's crimes, is his conscience pure? Is the 20th of November, 1683, effaced from his memory?'

The councillor crushed the billet in his hands, and was about to tear it, but he at once unfolded it carefully again, and examined it.

'Is this writing known to you?' said the baron.

'I am not in habitual correspondence with spirits of the other world,' replied the councillor coldly, and he thrust the billet in his pocket.

'You cannot keep that billet,' said the baron, 'it must be destroyed; such is the order.'

'No, no!' cried Barati, 'slight as is this evidence of infernal jugglery, I will keep it.'

'You will return it to me, sir,' said the baron. 'When I formally promised those three messengers of vengeance and of terror to obey their bidding, I swore that I would use this

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billet only to warn you of the necessity of accepting the reparation which I offered, and if you will examine it carefully, you will doubtless find a word that has a meaning for you, which I do not comprehend.'

Barati turned the page, and read the single word: '*Uri*!'* followed by the date, '*Dec.* 3*rd*, 1684.'

The effect produced by this word upon the councillor, was even more frightful than that which he had felt at the mention of the date of the 20th of November. He gazed at the fatal word, with haggard eyes, despairing face, panting breath, and uttering convulsively and at intervals the words:

'Yes—yes—fire—baron, a brazier—a taper!'

The baron struck upon the table; a domestic entered, raising the piece of tapestry which hung against the folding door of the hall.

'A taper!' said the baron, without looking up.

'Here is one,' said the domestic, who held it in his hand.

The baron raised his head, and starting up in alarm, he cried:

'Who art thou? whence comest thou?'

Barati gazed upon him in his turn; he beheld the pale and rigid face of a lean old man. Barati uttered a fearful cry, and fell backward upon his chair. The old man reached him the taper, and pronounced in a hollow voice the fatal word that was written upon the billet: '*Uri!*'

Barati mechanically obeyed, and approached the billet to the flame; scarcely was it consumed, when the domestic withdrew.

'Ha!' exclaimed the baron, starting from his seat, 'this one is a human being; it is now day, I will find him!'

He hurried toward the door, threw it open, and entered the apartments without, in which he found a few domestics with Langlois, and said:

'What has become of the man who entered the hall, and has just left it.'

'We have seen no one, my lord,' said one of those whom he addressed.

The baron durst not add a word, and returned at once to the hall. Barati, bent upon his chair, with his eyes fastened upon the door, seemed like a man deprived of reason.

'Was it no one,' he said, 'no one?'

'No one.'

'Oh! I knew it. The dead can return to their tombs as they leave them.'

'Did you recognize him, then?' said the baron.

'Yes—yes—' replied Barati. 'Oh, heaven is in arms

* Uri—to be burned.

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against us. We are lost!' he added, letting his head fall upon the table.

'No,' said the baron. 'But a single danger exists for you as well as for me.'

Barati raised his head.

'And this danger,' added the baron, sinking his voice, 'lies in the man who accompanied you hither.'

'Langlois?'

'The same, councillor Barati.'

'What can he do against you?'

'I do not know.'

'Or against me?'

'I do not know.'

'What! have they told you nothing of the danger to which this man can expose us?'

'Nothing.'

'Not a word of the means to prevent it?'

'Not a word.'

Barati appeared confounded, and he murmured in a hollow tone:

'Oh, there is always a way to silence such a man.'

'Councillor Barati,' said the baron, 'as your death would have been the signal for my ruin, so the death of Langlois would be the signal for yours. This man must live, and he must be silent for eight days. Thus much they told me.'

'But of what must he be silent?'

'Not one of the complaints which you have received against me must reach the ears of the parliamant. My life and yours depend upon it. I have already told you that if a soldier of the king or an officer of justice, crosses the threshold of this castle, we are both lost!'

A glance of triumph gleaned from the baron's eye, and Barati replied:

'Well, then, in one way or another he shall be silent, should it cost me my entire fortune. Is this all?'

'Yes,' said the baron, 'the rest concerns myself alone.'

'And how did this frightful scene terminate?'

'As it began. They wrapped my face in the covering, my limbs were unbound, and when I looked up, I was in my chamber, and on my bed. The day was beginning to dawn: I commanded my vassals to inform the peasants of your presence at the castle, and prepared everything for the reparation of which you were a witness, without asking a question of you or of Paula, or inquiring after Galidou, but obeying blindly all that had been prescribed to me. You must now see, sir councillor, that in my place you would have done the same.'

'And I will obey as you have obeyed,' replied Barati, as if he were addressing the supernatural beings by whom he

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fancied himself surrounded, rather than speaking to the baron himself.

'In that case, sir,' answered the baron, 'you should set out immediately. Your horses are ready, and you have no need of a guide.'

'Are we to meet again, Baron de la Roque?' said Barati.

'I do not know.'

'Adieu, then, sir; I will not forget that the Comte de Frias entered this castle never to leave it.'

'And, sir, I have stamped upon my memory the date of the 20th of November.'

The Baron de la Roque and the Councillor Barati saluted each other profoundly and separated.

CHAPTER X.

On the evening of the day on which Barati left the castle of Roque, after his interview with the baron, at the moment when twilight began to cast its faint shadows upon the deep valleys, while the summits of the mountain were still tinged with a roseate light, Jean Couteau was seated upon a rock called the Devil's Pulpit. Imagine, in the first place, two lofty and parallel hills, separated by a torrent flowing amid enormous rocks, at a depth of more than three hundred feet; the opposing sides of these hills were covered with box trees and holm oaks, so quickly set that it seemed impossible for the foot of man to force a passage through them, while, at intervals, varying the uniformity of this dark green mass, a few points of white rock projected horizontally from this gloomy shroud of foliage, the last vestiges of the fearful convulsions which had thrown up this mountain, vestiges which vegetation had not been able to conceal. The boldest of these rocks, stretching from the summit of one of these hills, almost reached the middle of the space which separated them, and it was at its extremity alone, that the spectator could look down into the abyss, as a sailor, seated at the end of a horizontal yard, sees the ocean at his feet; it was here alone that one could see the torrent which flowed at the bottom of the ravine, for the trees which extended to the very margin of the Slers, and which dropped over its waters, concealed it from those who would view its course from either of the two opposite summits.

It was upon this rock that Jean Couteau was now seated, and his glance could reach almost in a right line to the spot where these twin hills stretched like two formidable bastions from the flank of a lofty mountain, while the rocks which enclosed the bed of the torrent, ran like a colossal stair-way up its acclivity. When they had reached nearly two-thirds of the height of those hills, they terminated suddenly in a vast mass

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of uncouth rocks, surmounted by a grove of fir trees, and from which flowed the stream which fed the Slers. But this source was insufficient to envelope those enormous and irregular masses, covered with moss and lichens, and flowed merely between the deep clefts which severed them. Owing to this, at the moment of which we speak, illumined as it was by the setting sun, whose rays directly penetrated the gorge of the Slers, it offered the spectacle of a magnificent ribbon, checkered with gold and silver scales, thrown across a broad band of green velvet, with its hues here deepening into black, here fading into grey.

A few feet above the spot where the source made its appearance, a rock formed a species of platform, sheltered by a second fragment which surmounted it, like the arch of a niche. On this platform was a large fissure, which might end at the depth of a few fathoms, or might reach into the very heart of the mountain. No one knew which, for this opening, encompassed on every side by salient rocks, was inaccessible even to the boldest hunters.

It was called the Wolf's Niche. This name originated from the sudden appearance of a wolf upon this platform, more then two centuries ago. How it had reached this spot no one could tell. It had been seen for several days in succession, wandering around this rock and uttering fearful howls, until, at least, urged by hunger and by thirst, it endeavoured to descend the rocks, and was precipitated into the bottom of the abyss. From this, it was supposed that this fissure, which was visible at a distance, did not extend into the interior of the mountain; for otherwise the wolf would not have failed to retire into it from time to time, to seek another way of issue, and from the moment when it was first seen, it had not left the platform.

This picturesque spot was situated on the farther slope of the mountain upon which stood the castle of La Roque, and Jean Couteau, seated as we have said, upon the rock which hung over the ravine, was reflecting that it was yet necessary for him to cross the crest of the hill, then climb the summit of the mountain, and descend on the other side before he could reach the castle. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been but the labour of an hour, but on this day he was so warm with fatigue that he could not hope to reach it before night, and Jean Couteau, the bear-hunter, dreaded nothing so much as the darkness. Still, such was his weariness that he suffered the gloom to increase upon him, without making an effort to proceed upon his route. With his eyes sadly fastened upon the torrent, he followed all its windings, without, as it were, perceiving them.

'Yes,' he said, in a low voice, 'yes, some misfortune impends over our heads!'

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This thought, added to the steadfastness with which he gazed upon the torrent, rendered him dizzy; he felt himself seized with strange frenzy caused by the vapours of an abyss, and which urges us to plunge into the immense void that lies spread beneath the glance. He started up in affright to dispel the charm, and, to free himself from this powerful fascination, he looked out into the distance. The last rays of the sun were falling full upon the Wolf's Niche, and he started in alarm, for it seemed to him as if the platform was occupied.

As he had dispelled the dizziness which had seized him, he endeavoured also to chace away this species of delirium which displayed to him an animate object upon this inaccessible rock; he closed his eyes to repeat a prayer, and opened them again in the firm belief that the apparition must have vanished. But now, on the contrary, he beheld still more distinctly the outlines of a human form, drawn upon the back-ground of the cavity, and upon examining the stature of this man, his large felt hat, his attitude slightly bent, as if he were supported upon a long staff, Jean Couteau could not mistake Pastourel, or rather the shade of Pastourel.

After another prayer he gazed with more tranquillity upon the fearful apparition, and convinced himself that it was the ghost of Pastourel, if not Pastourel in reality. Still, however, it stood motionless, and Jean Couteau began to hope that nothing farther would occur to alarm him, when suddenly the form moved, and soon a distant voice reached his ear; he heard his name uttered distinctly, and he recognized, as he thought, the voice of Pastourel, and it seemed to say:

'Jean! Jean! Come! come!'

At this appeal, the easier to resist the impulse that seized him, and urged him to plunge into the abyss, Jean Couteau threw himself upon his knees, and prayed aloud, in order to drown the infernal voice which summoned him. Invigorated by this act of devotion, he rose, and without turning his eyes towards the Wolf's Niche, started on his way to the castle.

If the reader has well understood the description that we have given of this picturesque scene, he will perceive that by following the hill which joined the mountain, Jean must necessarily approach the Wolf's Niche; but the density of the thicket which bordered the path which he trod, concealed this fearful spot, and in the agitation which troubled him, our hunter thought himself still at a distance from it, when, through an opening which he had never before observed, he beheld the rock, the platform, and Pastourel a few fathoms above him. The shepherd seemed to be waiting for the moment when his old friend should pass. In truth, the same voice which had already called Jean Couteau was heard anew uttering distinctly the following words:

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'You will soon be questioned; but remember that *speech is silver, but silence is gold.*'

The shadow placed its finger upon its lips, as if to give emphasis to this magical sentence: then, while the hunter, with trembling knees, crossed himself in vain to exorcise this diabolical apparition, the shade, assuming an attitude of command, signed to him to proceed upon his way. It was obeying the devil, but Jean Couteau did not pause at this subtle distinction, and for the second time he took to flight in wild terror. He reached at last the gate of the castle, uncertain what to do, but resolved to act upon the inspiration of the moment, divided as he was between the fear of obeying and of disobeying the counsel which he had just received.

Scarcely had he crossed the threshold of the outer gate, when he was told that the baron wished to speak with him. Jean Couteau hastened to obey, hoping to find in the presence of the Baron de la Roque, a refuge against the horrible hallucinations which mocked him; but the first question which the baron addressed to him, reminded him of the injuction which he had received.

'Well then, Jean!' he said, 'what have you discovered?'

'Nothing, my lord, nothing which could satisfy you.'

'The baroness then—'

'Is not at the convent of La Madeline, neither is she with the beguines of Razepont, or with the Carmelites of Mars d'Albert.'

'Have you not been to Saint Benoit?'

'My lord,' said Jean Couteau, 'I went last night to Father Anselmo's; this morning I crossed to Saint Barthelmi; in the course of the day I returned to the castle, and I have since been to the places I have mentioned. I do not think that there are many men capable, after such a walk, of crossing Saint Benoit, which is more than two leagues in a direction entirely opposite.'

'You are right,' said the baron, 'and you must be weary.'

He rang, and a domestic having appeared, he directed him to prepare supper, and to place two plates upon the table. Jean Couteau would have excused himself, but the baron said:

'Remain, remain, Jean! There is an end to all ceremony now. The proud baroness has left the old mansion; we will resume our joyous suppers as of old, we will renew our hunts across the mountain, and laugh at the fools who say I do not maintain my dignity.'

Jean Couteau scanned the baron by the light of the tapers which were brought in, and observed that he had already anticipated his supper. His eyes gleamed with a savage fire, and Jean replied:

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'My lord, you were this morning justice and honour personified, but it seems to me that this evening, an evil spirit has seized upon you.'

'I fear neither spirits nor demons!' cried the baron, as if addressing himself to the walls of his chamber. 'Let them come! I dread them no longer.

And he placed near him his sword, a long poignard, and a pair of pistols.

'Come,' he resumed, turning to Jean Couteau, 'drain a cup and tell me the truth.'

'My lord,' replied Jean Couteau, with a firm but modest air, 'wine oftentimes takes away the memory of that which we ought not to forget, and brings to our lips that which we ought never to utter. I will not drink!'

'There are things, then, which you ought not to forget, and things which you ought not to utter?'

'It is possible, my lord, and in that I am like the most of mankind. If, for example,' he added, gently, 'if I were a father, I would not forget that I ought to care for the future fate of my daughter.'

The baron gazed at Jean Couteau with an air of menace, and replied:

'My daughter! you would speak of my daughter?'

He checked himself as he was about to utter wild imprecations against this innocent child, and added, with an air of indifference, as he helped Jean to a morsel:

'Yes, Jean, if you were a father, you would not forget the future fate of your daughter, and that which you ought not to utter is this—that you do not think—that you fear she is not—help me a little, old Jean! When we hunted together, and I had found the track, but was not quite sure of it, you would help me, and say:

'You are upon the track; follow, follow, and you will find the game!'

Jean Couteau trembled internally, but he was able to conceal his emotion, and he replied without hesitation:

'There is no fear of following the wrong track in following the law of God, which says that a father should watch over his child.'

The baron started, and took from the corner of his arm-chair a bag filled with silver; he threw it upon the table, and cried, in a sharp and angry voice:

'There, Jean Couteau, that is yours, if you will tell me why Don José killed Pastourel!'

The words uttered by the shepherd's shadow, '*speech is silver, but silence is gold*,' seemed now to have a meaning, and whether that Jean knew well how to distinguish between the metals, and hoped to see the silver changed into gold, or

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whether a superstitious fear spoke louder than the jingle of the crowns, he replied, casting a side glance at the bag:

'I am poor, my lord, and this money, if it could help me purchase my son's liberty from the army, would give me the greatest pleasure that a father can feel; but I cannot do that which is impossible, I cannot say that which I do not truly know.'

A thought now suddenly came to the assistance of Jean Couteau, and he continued:

'I cannot even say that it was Don Jose who killed Pastourel, for I did not see him.'

He then added:

'And who knows if Pastourel is dead?'

'Did you not see him on the ground, bleeding, lifeless?'

'It is true, I saw him thus, but since then I have seen him erect, and like a living man.'

'And you did not take him by the throat! you did not arrest him? It was daylight, you had your hands free, and you did not satisfy yourself, whether it were a demon, or a man of flesh and bones? You were afraid, Jean Couteau!'

'I did not deny it, my lord, and if you had seen him as I did in the Wolf's Niche, you would hardly have been tempted to assail him, but would have asked yourself if it were possible that a living man could mount to that spot or return again.'

It seemed as if Jean Couteau's words had confirmed a suspicion which had already taken root in the baron's mind; his eye flashed with strange satisfaction, and he exclaimed:

'It is so! it must be so!'

'What?' said Jean Couteau.

'The baron assumed a humble and hypocritical air, and replied, in a drawling tone:

'Yes! God must have permitted the dead to leave their tombs, to admonish and exhort the living.'

'Doubtless, it is so,' said Jean Couteau, who did not suspect the sincerity of the baron's words.

'Yes,' replied the old man, 'and the wisest course is to submit.'

He cast around the chamber a glance which Jean Couteau followed with astonishment, and then added in the same meek tone:

'And may pardon those, who, in their senseless temerity, have for a moment cherished the thought of penetrating these gloomy mysteries.'

Jean Couteau started and rose from his seat, for the manner in which the baron had uttered these words, and had glanced around him, seemed to indicate that he believed he was conversing with spirits as if they were present.

'My lord,' he said, with a troubled voice, 'have you

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witnessed, then, any extraordinary apparitions? Have you heard the voice of those who are no more?'

'My poor Jean Couteau,' replied the baron, 'it is always better to keep silence than to speak, according to the favourite maxim of the old Comte de Frias, an Arabian maxim which he learned in Africa, when he was governor of the Présides.'

'And this maxim?' said Jean.

'It was this—*that speech is silver, but silence is gold.*'

Jean Couteau gazed at the baron with alarm; he thought that his master knew what the shade of Pastourel had said to him, for that phrase was too singular to repeated by mere accident.

'And this, you say, was the favourite maxim of the Comte de Frias?'

'Yes, Jean.'

'In that case it is the favourite maxim of the dead also, for Pastourel repeated it to me to-day.'

'Pastourel!' cried the baron, 'Pastourel repeated this sentence?'

'Yes, my lord,' said Jean, 'and as it were an order that I must not disobey.'

The baron seemed to grow suddenly thoughtful, and after a gloomy silence, he said to the hunter:

'My poor Jean, you must submit; keep your secret then; we must not offend the dead. But let us speak no longer of things which it is forbidden us to comprehend. Jean, I shall leave to-morrow for Toulouse; will you accompany me?'

'My lord, I will do whatever you command.'

'Well, then! since I still have a faithful servant left, you shall go with me.'

'Where you go, my lord, I will go; but are you not afraid to place your head thus in the jaws of the Wolf? The arrest of the councillor Barati, is a crime in the eyes of parliament, for which they may punish you.'

'Barati has given me his word that the whole affair is arranged.'

'Can the word of a gownsman be trusted?'

'It is what it is,' said the baron, impatiently. 'I set out to-morrow for Toulouse. You can now withdraw.'

Jean Couteau rose and left his master's chamber, but in passing one of the outer halls, he beheld a tall white figure approaching him, and a low voice whispered in his ear the words which he had already heard: *Speech is silver, but silence is gold.* At the same moment he felt a purse placed in his hand. Jean uttered a cry of terror, which at once summoned the baron. The latter found him upon his knees with his face to the earth, and smiting himself upon his breast. The purse was on the ground near him.

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'What is the matter?' said the baron.

Jean, with a faltering voice, repeated the fatal sentence, and pointed to the purse. The baron raised it from the ground, and saw that it was filled with good and genuine double louis. A smile of joy rose to his lips, but he crossed himself devoutly, and replied in a humble, timorous tone:

'The castle is haunted by the damned! I will not pass another night within it. Come, Jean, come!'

The hunter suffered the baron to lead him onward without knowing whither, and it was not until the old seigneur pushed him into the famous kennel, in which Galidou had been confined, that he heard the baron say in a low voice:

'You can sleep in the kennel; the dogs have sharp teeth, and no spirits will visit you here.'

'What mean you, my lord?'

'I will explain it to you to-morrow,' said the baron.

He then directed him to mount to the loft, locked the gate of the kennel, took the key, and retired.

On the following morning the baron came himself to liberate Jean Couteau, and inquired how he had passed the night.

'*Ma foi*!' replied the latter. 'You were right, nothing disturbed my slumber. And you, my lord baron?'

'I?' replied the old seigneur, with a sarcastic smile. 'I found it pleasant to pass the night in my wife's chamber.'

'Ah!' said Jean Couteau, 'and nothing has happened to you?'

'Nothing but a bad dream,' said the baron, fixing a keen glance upon Jean. 'I thought I saw Paula escaping with Don Jose.'

Jean could scarcely conceal his agitation, and hoping to turn aside suspicion by changing the conversation, he said:

'And the child—will you leave it at the castle?'

'No, no,' said the baron. 'I sent Charlotte, yesterday, to my brother D'Auterive, to place her in safety against evil spirits. But despatch; my horses are ready, and we must be at Toulouse this evening.'

Before leaving, Jean Couteau wished to say adieu to some of the baron's domestics, not knowing, as he said, whether he should ever return from so long a journey; but the baron would not suffer it; and the groom, who held Jean's bridle, said to him in a low tone:

'Your request is useless; the baron has dismissed them all during the night, and God knows whither he has sent them.'

'To the devil! whither he is taking me, perhaps,' muttered Jean.

They gave their horses the spur, and took the road to the capital of Languedoc.

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CHAPTER XI.

We will avail ourselves of the privilege of the novelist, and take this long journey in a few seconds; we will reach Toulouse at the very hour when the baron left the castle of La Roque, and proceed at once to the house of Barati.

The councillor was in an ample wainscotted chamber, which was lighted by a wide and lofty window, that afforded free passage to the rays without. He was seated in front of a large table that was covered with papers; his head was bent upon his breast, his brows were knit, his face was pale and haggard. A young girl, of rare beauty, who was leaning with both hands upon the table, and gazing upon him with anxious tenderness, said in a soft voice—

'Well, father, what shall I say to this stranger, who wishes to speak with you?'

'How does he look? what is his age?' said Barati.

'He is a man of about sixty years: his face is mild and majestic.'

'It is not he!' said Barati, shaking his head; 'and still, Clemence, you say that he has spoken of a date—'

'Yes, father,' replied Clemence, 'as you gave orders that no one should be admitted to you, this stranger asked to speak with me. "None of your domestics," he said to me, "will announce my visit to the councillor, under the pretext that he is not at home. He is at home, I know. He arrived from the mountain at midnight. If he is asleep, awake him, and tell him that one of those who are in possession of the date of which he was reminded at the castle of La Roque, is very desirous to see him."'

'One of those!' muttered Barati, with a hollow voice. 'There are many, then, who know it!'

'And as I appeared to hesitate,' resumed the young girl, 'he added: "Do not fear that your father will be angry with you for disturbing his occupations or his sleep; on the contrary, he will be pleased."'

The councillor seemed disturbed by the most violent agitation. He rose, and cried warmly:

'This man has deceived you, Clemence. I have no time to receive any one. I had scarcely arrived when I found a letter from the parliament demanding a report concerning the business upon which I went to La Roque. I cannot receive this stranger.'

'I will tell him so—'

'Add,' said the councillor, rising again, and walking back and forth in agitation—'add that I know not what he means by that date of which I was reminded last night. I have heard twenty different dates mentioned by intriguers who

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would fain obtain admission into a respectable house under the pretence that they know—secrets. In fine this man—I will not see him!'

'I will carry him your answer,' said Clemence, 'but he will be greatly grieved, for he seemed very desirous to see you.'

'No, no,' said Barati, 'I will not.'

The young girl left the chamber, but scarcely was the door closed when Barati fell as if exhausted upon his chair, and buried his face in his hands.

'Oh!' he exclaimed, while his teeth chattered with rage, 'twenty years of honour, of courage, of sacrifices! nothing will have served me! and still it was justice! and because I avenged my wrongs, I shall be treated like a criminal! and I find myself at the mercy of a furious madman—what say I? of the first comer! For this man who asks to see me—who is he? what does he know?'

Then rising suddenly, he opened the door to recall Clemence, but it was too late, she had already crossed the hall, and he could hear her repeat accurately the answer which he had directed her to give the stranger.

The man uttered an exclamation of dissatisfaction, and said at last:

'Well, I will return in two hours, and God grant that it be not too late either for him or for me, if, indeed, I am able to return. But fearing that I might not find your father at home, I have written this billet for him. Will you place it in his hands?'

This circumstance restrained Barati, who was upon the point of calling out to this man that he was ready to listen to him.

'This billet,' he thought, 'will tell me what I have to and it will not appear as if I yielded to a threat.'

Clemence took the billet, and the unknown continued:

'Let him do exactly as is counselled in this billet, let him do it to save those who might have ruined him, and yet have not done so.'

Barati listened, endeavouring to recognise the voice, which had a slightly foreign accent, but it recalled no remembrance.

At the last words of the unknown, Clemence uttered a faint cry of terror, but the man at once added:

'As to you, fair maiden, who have been so kind to a stranger, receive, I pray you, this ring, and remember well what I say to you; if, in the course of a few days, perhaps to-day indeed, you are thrown into such a position that you can demand aid and protection from no member of your family, repair to the church of Saint Saturnin on Friday evening at the hour of vespers, and extend toward the altar the hand upon which you wear this ring, saying in a loud voice, "Lord

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of Mercy, come to my aid!" There may be some one perhaps who will hear you.'

Clemence gazed at the ring, which was very beautiful, and seemed to be of great value, but she drew back her hand as the stranger was about to place it upon her finger.

'Keep your ring, sir,' she said, 'although your age is such that I might look upon this gift as a token of kind liberality merely, yet I should appear very thoughtless in your eyes, were I to accept it, especially as I am the daughter of a magistrate.'

'It is unnecessary to mention it to your father, my child.'

'I could not receive it, sir, without mentioning it to him, and if I should he would forbid me to accept it.'

'Well then, my child,' said the stranger, 'remember my words; do not disdain them as you disdain my gift.'

'Unless God summons my father hence,' said Clemence, I shall always find aid in him, for I shall always endeavour to be worthy of it.'

'It is right for each to put faith in his virtue, but none but a madman will put faith in his fortune. Your father's aid may fail you although God should not summon him hence, and sooner than you think, perhaps.'

'You terrify me,' said Clemence, with an agitated voice, 'do you know of any danger which threatens my father?'

'Danger hangs over the head of every mortal; that man is blind, who, when he has reached the height of his wishes, disdains the warnings which might save him, but God, doubtless, has decreed that it should be so, in order that the day of justice may arrive for the strongest as well as for the craftiest.'

'Your words, sir,' said Clemence, with something of anger in her voice, 'your words, sir, although obscure, bear a semblance of accusation against my father. I neither can nor will hear more.'

'As you please, my child.'

During this conversation, to which Barati had listened with extreme anxiety, he had been several times upon the point of interrupting the interview, and directing Clemence to admit the stranger; but to do this he must revoke his resolution, and thus manifest a fear, which, in the eyes of his daughter, would prove the influence of that date of which he pretended to be ignorant. To do this, would show, also, that he had been listening to their discourse, an act but little in accordance with the dignity of a magistrate. He waited, therefore, until the unknown had taken his departure; Clemence seemed very slow in placing the billet in his hands, but as soon as he received it, he gave orders that the bearer should be admitted if he called again, and dismissed his daughter, who, with her eyes fixed upon him, stood amazed

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at the agitation which, in spite of all his efforts, was visible in his features.

Barati turned pale before her gaze, and with a violence which he had never before manifested to his child, he said:

'Have you not heard me, Clemence? Am I already a condemned man, that my daughter refuses to obey me?'

Clemence, already disturbed by the words of the stranger, was about to speak, but a second command from her father, uttered in a tone still more imperative, compelled her to retire.

As soon as Barati was alone, he opened the billet, in which he expected to find an explanation of the stranger's errand, but he was stupified at seeing that it referred to a subject which seemed entirely foreign to the remembrance of the fatal date which had been recalled to him. The billet ran as follows:

'It is now five years since a casket covered with shagreen, and ornamented with gilt-headed nails, was placed in your hands by a man to whom you promised to restore it on demand, or if he were unable to come and reclaim it in person, to destroy it upon his writing to you a sentence agreed upon between you. This sentence is the following:

'*Speech is silver, but silence is gold.*'

Burn the casket on the instant, without opening it. The moment has arrived.'

Here the councillor paused, remained motionless for an instant, and then continued to read:

'If you have kept your word the casket will be found upon the upper shelf of your book-case. I remind you of this circumstance if you have forgotten it, because an hour lost in searching after this treasure may ruin you, as well as those who placed it in your keeping, and forget not the date of the 20th of November!'

Barati crushed the billet in his hands; a kind of senseless fury seized him at the thought of being forced to obey this command, without receiving the slightest guarantee from those who held his life and honour in their keeping. He asked himself if it were not prudent for him to inquire for his own defence into the secret of those who possessed his secret. He was interrupted in his reflections by a loud knocking at the door of his house.

Barati imagined that it was the stranger, who had returned according to his promise, and his face was lighted up with joy. The next moment, however, the pride which had prompted him to refuse admission to this man, returned with all its strength. To display the slightest agitation at this fatal date, was to acknowledge the crime which it recalled, and this he would not have done amid the most frightful tortures. His courage rose again, a feeling of scorn took the

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place of his indecision—he opened the book-case, not to take the casket, but to seize a poignard, which he concealed beneath his doublet, then returning to his seat at the table, he arranged his papers, and with inclined head, and pen in hand, like a man deeply absorbed in thought, he awaited the announcement of the stranger. Notwithstanding this seeming indifference, the warning of this man absorbed him so exclusively, that he wrote down, unconsciously, the fatal date: 20th November, 1683.

At this moment the door was thrown open, and with a loud voice a herald exclaimed:

'The President de Fourvieres!'

This visit, thus suddenly announced in this manner, (for it was only in cases where the members of parliament visited a house as judges on some serious errand, that they were accompanied by a herald, at whose approach every door was opened, without time for warning,) this visit, we say, thus announced and at a moment when Barati expected one so different, filled him with such surprise and terror, that he started up, pale and trembling, like a culprit awaiting the entrance of his judge.

The President de Fourviéres was dressed in his robes of office. He was a man of about fifty years, with a face haughty and stern. Like Langlois, he resembled a bird of prey, but in the president this resemblance recalled the vulture, while in the clerk it reminded one of the raven.

He paused for a moment at the door, and cast a hurried glance around the cabinet of Barati, as if he expected to surprise some one with him. He concealed his wonder, however, at finding the councillor alone, but he observed his agitation, and gazed at him for a moment with piercing eyes. This was enough to put Barati on his guard; the entrance of this man, whom he heartily detested, and whom he knew to be his bitter enemy, apprised him that he was threatened with some imminent danger, and the insulting loftiness of that glance was a sufficient warning that this danger had been brought upon him by M. de Fourviéres.

At this moment, in presence of this man, who was his superior in office, but whose limited abilities and unlimited licentiousness were the objects of his profound contempt, the councillor, although ignorant of the point upon which he was to be assailed, at once resumed that firmness and energy of which he had given proof in the castle of La Roque. He returned with disdain the insulting salutation which had been addressed to him. By a sign he directed the president to be seated, resumed his place, and cast upon him that cold and penetrating glance, which had so often pierced the mysteries which shrouded the darkest crimes. The president was disturbed for a moment, but strong in the superiority of

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his station, and in the power with which his errand had invested him, he soon regained his courage. Barati did not utter a word, but waited for the president to address him. The latter, who had imagined that the councillor would inquire after the motive of his visit, and who had already prepared his answer, was silent, also, so that a momentary pause ensued, which would have been ludicrous, had not the features and mien of these two men announced that an important interview was about to take place between them.

At last, the president, seeing that Barati had resolved not to break the silence, began in these words :—

'My visit surprises you, sir?'

'You cannot doubt it, M. de Fourviéres.'

'I am about to tell you its object.'

'I am waiting to hear it.'

'You returned last evening from the castle of La Roque.'

'Last night, sir, at two o'clock precisely.'

'The chamber of inquest assembled this morning at six, and you were not present.'

'The chamber of inquest has not ridden thirty leagues in two days.'

'In obedience to its orders, you were to present your report immediately upon your arrival.'

Although not completely reassured at finding the conversation turn upon this subject, yet the councillor felt encouraged; he divined, as he thought, that the blow aimed at him by M. de Fourvières had no connection with the fears which disturbed him at the moment when the magistrate entered the apartment; and practising against him the same tactics which he would have employed against a stranger, that is to say, the most consummate assurance and disdain of every imputation, he gazed upon the president with an air of unspeakable haughtiness; his glance seemed to penetrate to the very depths of the truth which the latter appeared inclined to conceal from him, and he replied :

'The chamber of inquest has taken the precaution to render my report superfluous, by appointing master Langlois my associate in this affair; it has his minutes in its hands, and has not waited for my report.'

The president seemed at first confounded; but he soon regained his composure.

'That is a proof, sir, that a subordinate officer of the parliament has afforded you an example of the manner in which your duties should have been performed.'

The glance that Barati fixed upon the president, the smile which accompanied this glance, and the tone in which he replied to him, would have been the signal for mortal combat between two men of the sword; it but added venom to the hate which existed between these two gentlemen of the robe.

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'Has the chamber of inquest read the minutes of master Langlois?'

'I have read them, sir,' replied M. de Fourvieres, sternly.

'Has the assembled chamber read them?'

'It has read them, sir.'

'And the chamber has found that I have been negligent in my duty, and that—and that your protege, master Langlois, has given me an example which I ought to copy.'

The president bit his lips, and replied with ill-disguised anger:

'The chamber has been astonished—'

'Has been astonished?' interrupted Barati, repeating the words of M. de Fourvieres, with a tone of doubt.

'The chamber has regretted that the fatigues which you have undergone, should have prevented you from appearing before it at once, and as it is unwilling to defer the punishment due to the outrage which it has received in your person, it has charged me to come and inquire after the facts from your own lips.'

Barati, in his turn, found himself closely pressed. Unwilling to endure the insulting form which the president M. de Fourvieres would have given to the errand with which he had been entrusted, he had compelled him to clothe it with the grave and becoming character which such a step should be invested by parliament; but he suddenly found himself in a position which he knew to be replete with danger, and which he would fain have approached in his own fashion. If the reader will recall the injunction which Barati had received from the Baron de la Roque, directing him to prevent the parliament from taking measures against the old seignieur, and above all, from sending an officer to the castle, he will readily understand the embarrassing nature of this examination.

Barati had not doubted but that he should be able to suppress this inquest, but for this end he needed time for a separate and private interview with each of his colleagues in order to instruct them, one by one, as to the result of his visit to La Roque, in order to describe the confinement to which he had been subjected as an act of mere churlishness and want of hospitality, and to persuade them that except a slight show of resistance, the bare appearance of a member of the parliament, had at once rendered the old man submissive and obedient. In fact, now that the culprit had redressed the grievances of the manufacturers, and the latter had accepted payment for the damages which they had suffered, Barati, passing slightly over his personal affronts, would easily have persuaded his colleagues of the folly of prosecuting a suit, in which there were now no complaints. And he would doubtless have succeeded in his project if he had been the

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first to obtain a hearing, but the report given in by Langlois of the events which had occurred at the castle, a proceeding contrary to all established usage, seemed to render this plan impracticable, and deprived the counsellor of all hope of obeying the injunction of those mysterious beings, who had guaranteed the safety of the baron and of Barati, upon the condition that the parliament should not pursue its investigations at the castle of La Roque. The danger had thus assumed a new aspect.

Still the interrogatory was direct, and and a reply was necessary. The councillor endeavoured to evade it by an ordinary subterfuge, that of accusing others.

'So then,' he replied, with a haughty tone, 'the chamber of inquest esteems itself sufficiently enlightened by the imperfect minutes of one of its inferior officers; and in virtue of such a document, the chamber would take into its hands the magement of an affair which it has entrusted to me."

'Pardon me, sir,' rejoined the president, with the authority, not of the individual, but of the superior in office, 'pardon me, the parliament does not think itself sufficiently enlightened, since it has commissioned me to visit you for the purpose of obtaining further information. It does not wish to take into its hands the management of an affair which it has once placed in yours, since this affair has been arranged to the satisfaction of all parties. But parliament is unwilling that its authority, its sovereignty, its sanctity, should be compromised by the culpable or self-interested indulgence of one of its members."

'I imagined,' said Barati, who could scarcely control his anger, at finding himself thus forced in his last entrenchment, by a man who openly professed to hate him; 'I imagined that I had proved,' he said, contemptuously, 'that I am not the man to allow the parliament to be insulted in my person.'

'It is true, sir, you spoke and acted with becoming dignity on the evening when you were conducted into the presence of the Baron de la Roque; no one can reproach you on this point, but you have been subjected to personal violence, which you were unable to resist, and which must not remain unpunished.'

'President de Fourvieres,' replied Barati, 'I see a wide difference between a design formed by a man in the full possession of his faculties to affront an august assembly, and the burlesque farce of a madman; and, for my part, I have found no insult—'

The president gazed at Barati with an air of scorn, and said:

'Ha! you have found no insult in that which has occurred to you! It is possible that there was none to you personally, for, your duties as a magistrate once finished, in your own

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judgment at least, you had an interview, very amicable, doubtless, with the baron, but the parliament considers itself insulted—'

At these words Barati rose, and replied gravely:

'M. de Fourvieres, it is useless to continue; I see in all this a formal accusation against me; this procedure is a far greater insult to me than any which the parliament has ever received in my person. I refuse, definitely, to answer any further questions, and I shall await the accusation which has been entered against me.'

Barati hoped to end the discussion by this formal declaration, but the president replied with bitter irony:

'No accusation has been entered, sir; on the contrary, the chamber acts with indulgence; facts have come to the knowledge of parliament, but it is unwilling to admit them as true, except so far as they are confirmed by your evidence, and knowing that your hasty journey had prevented you from giving in your report, it has commissioned me, I repeat it—to visit you, and obtain the requisite information. What can you find insulting in this procedure?'

'M. de Fourvieres,' said the councillor, turning his face to conceal his agitation, 'I will report to the chamber in person, or in writing, as it may decide.'

'Councillor Barati,' said the president, putting on his hat; 'it has pleased the chamber that you should report to me at once.'

Barati was stupified. The question now was whether he should place himself in a state of open revolt against the parliament, or acknowledge facts which would necessarily lead to those measures against the Baron de la Roque, which he had been warned would tend directly to his ruin, and the baron's. If these measures were taken, was he not menaced with the disclosure of that secret which he thought buried in the tomb, that secret of which he had been reminded by the terrible date of the 20th of November. He cast upon the president one of those lowering glances, which seem to seek a spot for the poignard: his hand sought instinctively the weapon which he had destined for another, and he seemed so terrified at the emotion which disturbed him that he withdrew to a greater distance from his enemy. He walked once or twice across his cabinet, and after a few moments' reflection, he subdued his pride, he subjected his hate before the power which menaced him, and replied with forced deference:

'M. de Fourvieres, as a magistrate I am incapable of trampling upon the vanquished. M. de la Roque has demeaned himself most loyally, and the greater part of his fortune will be employed in the payment of the sums offered by him, and accepted by the complainants. In addition to this humiliation, to this loss, a domestic calamity has fallen upon him, a

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calamity as severe as unexpected. I was unwilling, I still am so, to add to these misfortunes by a denunciation which would complete the ruin of a man endowed with many estimable qualities. This is the cause of my silence, and it is for this reason that I hesitate to add the authority of my testimony to the facts which have been disclosed to you.'

'You acknowledge them to be facts, then?'

'I am ignorant of what has been disclosed.'

'Give in your evidence, and we will then judge how far it agrees with the information, of which we are already in possession.'

'And thus, sir,' said Barati, who saw that these measures were directed, rather against himself than against the Baron de la Roque, 'and thus, sir, my word is to be placed upon a level with the allegations of a man like Master Langlois.'

'I do not know what will be thought of the value of these allegations, if you declare them to be false; to judge of this, it is necessary that you should answer.'

Barati was for a moment a prey to one of those transports of fury, which impel a man to slay the enemy, who, holding him in his power, sports with the helpless rage which he inspires. He subdued his emotion, however, and shrugged his shoulders in silence. The president continued, in an angry tone:

'Were you, or were you not, constrained by force to enter the castle of La Roque?'

'I went thither of my free will; I proclaimed it aloud,' said Barati, as he walked back and forth in his cabinet.

'I do not doubt it, but was not this an artifice to conceal the necessity in which you were placed of obeying an *armed injunction*.'

'Had I not thought it my duty to enter the castle of La Roque, I would have perished on the spot where I encountered the armed emissaries of the baron, and it required a formal and repeated order from me to induce Master Langlois, who is a coward, like all informers, to follow me thither.'

'You encountered armed men, then, who directed you to repair to the castle?'

Barati could not control a gesture of indignation at seeing the address with which M. de Fourvieres caught at a word that had escaped him. The latter remarked it, and added with an air of irony:

'I gather as much from your words. Then, were you not imprisoned and so closely that the Baroness de la Roque offered to assist you in making your escape, an offer which you nobly refused, in order to fulfil your duty to the last, despite all the dangers to which it exposed you?'

'In truth, sir,' replied Barati endeavouring to imitate the tone of raillery in which the president addressed him, 'one

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would think that I had braved tortures, the rack, death. Such is Master Langlois' cowardice that he mistook a ground chamber for a dungeon, a poor bed for the straw of a criminal, and one of the baron's lackeys for a headsman !'

'You do not answer me, sir,' resumed the president. 'No one doubts of your courage, or of the cowardice of Master Langlois, but though you found nothing terrifying in the ridiculous display of the baron, this does not prove that it was not his intent to terrify you. And, in truth, sir, to judge from the pertinacity with which you evade my questions, and seek to mitigate facts which demand severe rebuke, I should be almost tempted to believe that he had succeeded.'

The feeling which had induced Barati to refuse admission to the stranger who had presented himself in the morning, was the shame of seeming to yield to a menace. M. de Fourvieres, in accusing the councillor of being influenced by fear in thus refusing to announce M. de la Roque, aroused again that rash susceptibility, and forgetting that for the last hour, he had been using all his exertions to escape from the necessity of confirming Langlois' accusation, Barati replied hastily :

'President de Fourvieres, I pitied the Baron de la Roque, but I did not fear him, neither do I fear him now ! The accusations which you bring against him are true, but I was unwilling on my part to engage the parliament in an affair in which the insult was so ridiculous, and in which the reparation might be ridiculous also. Do not expect from me then, a report within the short time which you require. No, sir, no, I will not give it. I leave it to others to prosecute such petty offences,

The President de Fourvieres now rose and said to Barati :

'Be assured, sir, the affair will be a serious one, and more so than you imagine. In the name of the parliament, I declare you my prisoner !'

Barati started back at this declaration, and exclaimed with surprise and alarm :

'Prisoner ! I, sir, and for what crime ? under what pretext ?

'You can conjecture it, sir ?'

'I am a member of the parliament,' said Barati, proudly ; 'of that parliament which crushed, in this city, the infamous tribunal of the Inquisition, and crushed it, (you would remember this, M. de Fourvieres, if you knew the chief claim of parliament to public esteem.) crushed it, I say, because when those who were summoned before it, desired to learn the crimes of which they were accused, it was the usual reply of that iniquitous tribunal that they could be at no loss to conjecture them.

The president did not answer, and Barati added :

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'How much time will be allowed me to arrange my affairs?'

'The parliament has not thought it necessary,' said M. de Fourvieres, 'to allow you any time. The affairs of an honest man are always arranged; those only who have something to conceal need the time which you demand. You will immediately follow the officer who waits in your antechamber; he will accompany you in my carriage to the capital.'

All Barati's courage forsook him at this stern command. He thought of those supernatural beings in the castle of La Roque, and of that mysterious casket which he had been directed to destroy. He believed himself lost, yet without knowing how, and had the man before him been any other than an implacable enemy, he would have stooped to implore an hour's delay. But his conviction of the uselessness of this step saved him from this display of weakness; and he was about mechanically to obey the order of the president, when Clemence, who had been alarmed by the singular words of the Unknown, by her father's agitation, and by the arrival of M. de Fourvieres, attended as he was by a herald, entered the apartment, contrary to her custom, without being summoned, and said to the councillor:

'My father, I have just seen the stranger who called here this morning; he is a few steps from the house.'

M. de Fourvieres measured Clemence with a stern glance, which he then directed to Barati, as if to say, 'Is it the office of the young girl to announce her father's visitors. Has curiosity prompted this step, and is her father's supervision so careless that she is thus ignorant of the rules of good breeding?'

'I cannot admit this man, *I do not know him*,' said the councillor, with marked emphasis upon the last words.

'It is impossible for your father to admit any one,' rejoined M. de Fourvieres. 'Tell this to your domestics, mademoiselle; it is their duty to reply to visitors, as it is to announce them.'

At this era, a young girl like Clemence was accustomed to receive with respect a reproof from one older than herself, and the poor child bent her head and cast her eyes to the ground; but she was greatly astonished at her father's silence, for he had directed her to announce the stranger as soon as he made his appearance.

Clemence was about to withdraw, but at this moment, the officer who had accompanied M. de Fourvieres entered the apartment.

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CHAPTER XII.

The officer who entered the apartment was a handsome young man, of a pleasing figure and careless air, and he spoke in a tone almost of impertinence.

'Ma foi! president,' he said, 'I advise you to despatch matters: I do not know how it has happened, but a crowd of common people have collected before the house, crying out that you are going to arrest the councillor Barati, and that they will not suffer it; they have already commenced a show of rebellion, by taking the horses from your coach, and compelling the driver to lead them home, so that we must wait for another carriage, or conduct the prisoner on foot through the streets of Toulouse.'

The officer spoke as if he felt a kind of pleasure in apprising M. de Fourvieres of the danger which threatened him.

'How is it, sir?' said the president, angrily, 'that the people have been informed that I was here? how comes it that they have collected together, and that you have suffered it?'

'President de Fourvieres,' said the officer, who was no other than M. D'Auterive, the nephew of the Baron de la Roque, in whose company the son of Jean Couteau served as a private, 'President de Fourvieres, I received an order from my colonel to escort you to this house, and I have done so with six soldiers and a subaltern, without knowing for what. If the populace have been warned of your projects, it can only have occurred from some indiscretion on your part or that of your associate.'

'That is true, sir,' replied M. de Fourvieres, 'and it is strange—'

He glanced at Barati with a threatening air. The latter, who hoped for a chance of safety in this unexpected obstacle to his immediate arrest, said with a tone of scorn:

'Is this crime to be laid to my charge also, and would you accuse me of having excited a revolt against orders, of which I was as ignorant as M. D'Auterive?'

The president turned his back upon Barati, and, addressing the officer, he said:

'And you are prepared to execute these orders, I suppose, notwithstanding the clamours of a few turbulent knaves?'

'President de Fourvieres,' replied D'Auterive, with a respect blended with much of that insolence, which a soldier is ready to display toward a gownsman, 'my colonel has placed me at your orders for an affair, which, as he said, was connected with the service of the king. In obeying you I obey his majesty, my master and yours, and if in the fulfilment of

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my duty, it is necessary to charge this populace, I am ready to do so at the risk of my life and yours.'

That our readers may understand these words, we must inform them that owing to one of the privileges of the city of Toulouse, a royal garrison could not be quartered within its walls without the consent of parliament, and the regiments once admitted into the city would be expelled again by a decision of the magistrates. In this state of things, we can readily understand the want of sympathy which existed between these officers of the royal troops, and the gentlemen of the robe, or gownsmen, as they termed them. This had reached such a point, that if a revolt had broken out against the parliament, in that which may be called the sphere of its official authority, the military force would have looked on without interfering. An affair only which concerned the royal service could induce the commander of a regiment to place one of his officers at the disposal of parliament. On the other hand, the deeds which had been recalled to Barati's remembrance by the fatal date which had produced such an impression upon him at La Roque, and which had been invoked to obtain the mysterious casket, these deeds, we say, did not constitute a crime against the king, a crime which would have justified the employment of one of his officers. The accusation in question then, must be of a very different nature, and as Barati was conscious of no other crime, he drew fresh courage from this circumstance, and although he did not yet suspect the cause of his arrest, he believed himself almost safe, and turning to the officer, he said:

'Your interference is useless, sir; no constraint is necessary to render me submissive to the orders of parliament.'

The officer seemed somewhat dissatisfied to see a man disdain the honour of being arrested by him, and he replied drily:

'Whether you consent or not, councillor Barati, I must conduct you to the capital, for I have orders to do so. I will lead you thither in person, or the rabble assembled before this door must take my life. But I ought not to expose this gentleman,' he added, pointing to the president, 'to those dangers which it is my duty to brave, and I feel obliged to warn him that among the groups which are gathered about the house, they talk of nothing less than strangling him. It is true, all this is said in a low voice, and with circumspection, yet their purpose seems the more determined from its very calmness, and I confess that with but six men, I shall find it no easy task to guard my prisoner, whom they have resolved to rescue, and M. de Fourvieres, whom they have resolved to hang.'

M. D'Auterive uttered the concluding words in a tone of raillery, so insulting to the president, whose courage was by

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no means beyond suspicion, that Barati, listening solely to his hatred for M. de Fourvieres, forgot the prudence required by his situation, and said:

'I think there is nothing to fear, gentlemen; I venture to assure you that this populace will be appeased by my voice.'

'He who has excited the rebellion, has doubtless the power to calm it,' cried the president, with the anger of a man alarmed for his own safety.

'And how the d——l,' said the officer, 'could the councillor have thought of aid from the populace when he did not know that he was to be accused? But some one better informed, has probably taken thought for him,' added D'Auterive, glancing at Barati. 'It is now for you, worthy president, to conjecture who thus betrays the secret of your deliberations.'

At this moment Barati thought of that stranger to whom he had refused admission into his presence, and whom his daughter had seen in the neighbourhood of the house. Was it he who had collected this crowd, which was every moment increasing in numbers, but which as yet had not uttered a shout? The councillor suspected it. At the words of the young officer the same thought occurred to the president, and he said:

'Captain, I wish to question the stranger of whom Mademoiselle Barati has just spoken.'

The officer knit his brows, and answered roughly:

'What stranger?'

'Why, it seemed that he was on his way to this house when Mademoiselle Barati came to announce his approach: he must have presented himself at the door.'

'But the doors have been closed against every one, according to your orders,' replied the officer.

'Perhaps he is not far off. Let them try to find him.'

The features of Captain D'Auterive assumed an air of vexation mingled with impatience, and he exclaimed in an affected tone:

'Pierre Couteau! Pierron!'

'Here, captain!' replied a rough voice, from the foot of the staircase, which led to the street door.

'Let the stranger be arrested, who was to have called upon M. Barati, and whose appearance mademoiselle has just announced to her father, as the President de Fourvieres asserts.'

This manner of commanding an arrest brought a frown upon the president's brow.

'No stranger has been here,' replied the voice.

'Try and find him,' said the captain.

'What kind of a man is he,' asked the soldier.

'What kind of a man is he?' said the officer, turning to the president.

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M. de Fourvieres, although the question was a very natural one, was unwilling to endure the tone in which it was addressed, and he replied:

'Captain, you forget that you are here at my orders.'

'I am so far from forgetting it, that I demand of you the means to execute them.'

'Mademoiselle,' resumed the president, 'what was the age, the appearance, the dress of this man?'

Clemence hesitated to answer, and the officer, by a stealthy sign, warned her to be upon her guard. She replied:

'He was a man of about thirty years, small, and had the appearance of a shop keeper.'

'D'Auterive smiled, and this smile convinced Barati that he was in some way connected with the stranger. The officer repeated to Pierre Couteau the description which had been given of the unknown, and added with a slight accent of mockery:

'Look for him, and find him, if you can.'

The soldier opened the street door, and the crowd, which until now had been so strangely silent, commenced shouting and hooting. The officer turned pale, but the flash of anger that darted from his eyes proved that it was not fear which produced the change. It was evident that the young man expected the outbreak which followed, and he was pleased at the thought perhaps; but the idea of seeing his uniform insulted by the crowd which stood around the door was too much for his patience, and he exclaimed:

'President de Fourvieres, you have directed my soldiers to leave this house; they will not enter it again, for I am unwilling that they should appear to fly before this yelping rabble. Decide what you will do, for I have no other course left, except to make my way through this crowd, sword in hand, with you and your prisoner, if you will, or without you, if you fear to follow me.'

'Captain,' replied the president, 'command your men to return. You will be answerable to the parliament for the safety of this prisoner, and—'

'And for yours, sir,' interrupted the captain. 'Perhaps so, but I cannot win the day, with you for my commanding officer; and after all, I do not know what ought to be the order of this battle.—Shall we remain here, or go forth?'

At this moment the shouts were renewed with increased violence, the street door was thrown open, the soldiers were forced back into the hall, and cries of 'Down with the parliament!' were heard. M. de Fourvieres started backward in affright, and Barati said:

'Prisoner or not, sir, I am still a magistrate, and since you are without the courage to repel these insults, I will prove to

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you that I know how to defend the dignity of that parliament whose honour you accuse me of compromising.'

He walked at once toward the platform, which overlooked the staircase, at the foot of which a number of people were crowded together, whose efforts to make their way into the house were with difficulty restrained by the few soldiers who resisted them.

'Who dares, in my house, to cry "Down with the parliament," said the councillor, in a voice of thunder.

Frenzied shouts of 'Long live Barati! Down with the parliament!' interrupted him. Still, the feature in this strange scene which most surprised Barati, was the unexpected popularity which protected him. Up to this hour he had endeavoured to pass for an austere and upright magistrate, but he had never sought to gain the favour of the populace. These cries of 'Long live Barati!' this crowd, which braved the orders of the parliament and the muskets of the soldiers, surprised and bewildered him.—The thought that his merit had gained him the love of his fellow-citizens, which was thus suddenly displayed, took complete possession of his mind. For a moment he believed himself master of this crowd that shouted before his door, and after having obtained silence, he continued with a deliberate accent:

'Fear nothing on my account, worthy inhabitants of Toulouse. Whatever accusation may be brought against him whom you have hastened hither to defend, I shall be able to disprove it. Repair to the parliament, follow me, I shall appear there, supported by your acclamations, and my enemies will regret their imputations.'

Barati did not observe the laughter with which his address had been received, and having finished it, he descended some steps of the staircase, and then turning his head, he said in a loud voice:

'Come, President de Fourvieres, I will answer for your safety!'

The president, not withstanding his alarm, could not resist this direct appeal, and he advanced in his turn upon the platform of the staircase, accompanied by the officer, who did not manifest the slightest indignation at what was passing before him.

Scarcely had the president made his appearance, when the hootings of the crowd were renewed with fearful violence. Their enthusiasm for Barati had been somewhat equivocal in its character, but their rage against M. de Fourvieres could not be mistaken. One could remark, however, that it seemed to be excited by several men of an air and mien above the common rank, who made their way amid the most furious, and, but for the loud and constant clamour, the sound of pieces of money could have been heard upon the pavement

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of the lower hall, as they slipped from the hands which were held out to receive them.

The president would have spoken, but his words were drowned by the most violent cries. Barati, in his turn, tried to obtain silence, but his voice could not rise above the tumult, his gestures could not appease it. Suddenly, three or four men threw aside the long cloaks which covered them, and appeared, dressed in the livery of the president. He did not recognise them as his domestics, however, for he commanded the soldiers to arrest those wretches, but whether they had not heard, or had misunderstood him, these lacqueys, armed with enormous sticks, forced their way through the line of soldiers at the foot of the stairs, and ascended two or three steps. A struggle now took place upon the stairs. Barati was about to resist the assault, but he stopped, and uttered a fearful cry at the sight of a man who said to him in a low voice, '20th November, 1683,' and then passed on after having rudely thrust him aside.

It was the same man who had brought him a taper at the castle of La Roque.

At this moment the assailants came in contact with M. de Fourvieres. The president would have withdrawn into the apartment, but the door had been fastened by the man who had dashed Barati aside, and who had entered the chamber unperceived even by D'Auterive; the latter had beckoned Clemence into a small corridor, contiguous to the staircase, where he said hurriedly:

'On the upper shelf of your father's bookcase there is a casket which contains papers that may ruin him. Remove it. Some one will demand it again at the proper time and place.'

These words were drowned by the cries of 'Long live Barati!' cries which formed a strange contrast with the brutal manner in which he had been thrust aside.

'I have seen this casket,' said Clemence. 'Be at ease.'

She then tried to enter the apartment, but finding the principal door locked against her, she was obliged to have recourse to a private stairway to reach her father's cabinet. This circumstance, to which she attached no importance, cost her but a few moments of time, which were taken advantage of, doubtless, by the man who had entered before her.

In the meantime the assailants had seized M. de Fourvieres; they raised him in their arms, carried him down the staircase, and bore him to a carriage which stood before the door; they thrust him in, and entered it with him, without the slightest opposition from those around; then, amid shouts, and violent tumult, the door of the carriage was closed upon him, and starting off, it made its way through the crowd, and soon disappeared around a neighbouring corner.

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No sooner had this occurred than M. D'Auterive approached Barati, and said in a low tone:

'Now, sir, can you accompany me to the parliament without fear.'

But the counseller seemed no longer to see or hear what was passing around him.

At this moment, a man whom D'Auterive recognised as an innkeeper, whose house had served as the rendezvous of many an intrigue, ascended the stairs in haste, and whispered some words in the officer's ear, to which the latter seemed to listen with extreme surprise. He allowed him to pass, however, and saw him hurry onward with the air of a man perfectly acquainted with the localities of the dwelling. His progress was arrested by the door which had been locked on the inside, and he also turned aside to the private staircase which Clemence had ascended a moment before.

The officer now left the house; in escorting his prisoner he took various precautions which he had neglected for the protection of M. de Fouvieres. He ordered his men to shoulder their muskets, and placed himself at their head, sword in hand. One would have said that the soul and spirit of this revolt had disappeared with the men who had carried off M. de Fourvieres, the crowd fell back, and Barati, led by two soldiers, was obliged to leave his house, and traverse a part of the city on foot, escorted by a band of armed men, like the meanest criminal, and still not a cry, not the slightest token of sympathy broke from the crowd which followed him, and which a moment before had shouted so loudly 'Long live Barati!'

The councillor remarked this singular change. He wished to question the officer concerning it, but the latter kept at a distance from him.

The train advanced amid a crowd of people, which at every step grew more and more numerous, each one inquiring the cause of this extraordinary commotion. The news spread by degrees, and before an hour had passed, the whole city of Toulouse was informed that a councillor of the parliament had been arrested in his house, an event which occasioned no little surprise.

The progress of the soldiers was slow, for they were unwilling to manifest the slighest fear of the populace, and it was not until an hour had elapsed that D'Auterive reached the capitol with his prisoner. He was immediately admitted before the assembled chamber, which appeared to have remained in session to await the execution of its orders.

In the presence of the chamber, M. D'Auterive preserved that air of respectful raillery which he had displayed toward M. de Fourvieres. He related, how while he was awaiting the orders of the president, a crowd had assembled before the dwelling of the councillor; how Barati had harangued them to appease

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their fury, and how M. de Fourvieres, trembling with fear, had thought it best to leave the house under the protection of half-a-dozen of his lacqueys, whom he had summoned to his assistance. D'Auterive added, that he had not on this account considered himself discharged from the duty which had been entrusted to him, namely, that of arresting Barati; that consequently he had escorted him to the capitol, and now consigned him into the hands of the parliament.

One of the councillors, the Comte de Belissane, knit his brows, and said, in a tone of suspicion to the officer:

'We will await the arrival of M. de Fourvieres, to learn if the facts have occurred precisely according to this statement. The officers and the soldiers who escorted our president, have but ill defended him against the populace, since he has been obliged to resort for assistance to his lacqueys.'

'Was it my duty, sir,' said D'Auterive, haughtily, 'to seize M. de Fourvieres, and compel him to march side by side with the prisoner? None but his own domestics have approached him, and if I allowed them to interfere, it was only because I saw, as I imagined, that the president preferred their protection to mine. For the rest,' added D'Auterive, 'I have saved the parliament from a humiliation in allowing M. de Fourvieres to make his escape, as his alarm almost robbed him of his senses, and afforded the populace a spectacle of which I was willing to deprive them.'

'Captain,' said the councillor, 'M. de Fourvieres will give us an acount of your conduct, and we shall render an account of it to your colonel.'

'As you please, sir,' said D'Auterive.

He was about to retire when the president entered the hall. He was deadly pale: and his air was like that of a man who had just escaped from some terrible danger. His appearance disturbed M. D'Auterive, and a glance which he exchanged with the councillor who had reproved him, did not seem to reassure the young officer, for the Comte de Belissane now appeared deeply agitated. M. de Fourvieres slowly ascended his seat. All present gazed at him with anxious curiosity, such was the air of dismay which was visible in his features. He saluted the assembly, and spoke in the following words:—

'In the first place, gentlemen, I must thank M. D'Auterive for the courage with which he has executed the orders I gave him. He has not only succeeded in bringing away his prisoner, but it was owing to his aid that I was able to reach my carriage, and thus escaped the menaces of those assassins who surrounded me.

This was saying more in D'Auterive's favour than he had ventured to say for himself, and the councillor who had appeared to suspect the conduct of the officer hastened to reply:

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'The modesty of M. D'Auterive has been so great, that it has led me to be unjust toward him. I feared for a moment that he had not properly fulfilled his duty. I offer him my sincere excuses.'

'D'Auterive smiled, bowed, and then requested permission to withdraw, which was at once granted to him. The doors of the tribunal were then closed, and Barati remained alone in the presence of his colleagues.

Scarcely had D'Auterive left the capitol, when he returned to his dwelling, and having exchanged his uniform for the simple garb of a student of the university, he sallied forth by a door which opened upon an almost deserted street; he walked onward until he reached its extremity; he then knocked at the door of a small dwelling which was opened apparently by some unseen hand. D'Auterive entered in haste, shut the door behind him, and ascended a narrow, gloomy stairway. A second door was thrown open as if by magic, to receive him, and he found himself in an apartment in which five men were assembled, one of whom was about sixty years of age; the others were younger. One of these still wore the dress of the lacqueys who had carried off the president. No sooner had D'Auterive entered than he exclaimed hastily:

'*Pardieu*, gentlemen, you manage matters strangely. You commission me to carry off the president and to get him out of the way, and then you set him at liberty. If I and Belissane had been wanting in coolness, we had all been lost.'

'We set the president at liberty,' replied the old man, 'but not until we had pulled out his teeth. He cannot bite now, and if he tries to bark, it will be in vain, for the papers which could ruin us all, must have been removed from Barati's before this.'

The chevalier appeared strangely surprised at these words. But whether it were that he had been guilty of rashness in charging Clemence to remove the casket, or whether he wished to be the sole master of this singular association, of which he seemed to be a member, he made no observations upon this point, and replied with a smile:

'This poor councillor would be sadly at a loss to understand why he is at the same time, the object of the accusations of the parliament, and of our secret protection.'

'Without doubt,' replied the old man, sternly, 'but we are still more at a loss to know who it is that has informed against our association to M. de Fourvieres. Could you not furnish us with some information on this subject?'

'I?' said D'Auterive, 'where do you imagine that I could have obtained it?'

'Refresh your memory, and perhaps you will discover.'

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D' Auterive started backward, and striking his forehead, exclaimed with frank simplicity:

'Death and hell! Marietta has blabbed!'

'He confesses it,' said the man who was dressed as a lacquey, in a rough tone.

The old man turned toward the speaker with a kind of deference, and replied:

'Yes, he confesses it, and the manner in which he does so, is a proof that he has revealed our secret from heedlessness rather than from treachery.'

'What matters it? the time is short, the parliament is warned, and the fruit of twenty years labour will be destroyed.'

'No, sir,' said the old man, 'M. de Fourvières will keep the promise which he has given us, and as he has been the author of this strange investigation, his proposition will obtain the assent of the chamber. On the other hand Belissane is too intelligent not to guess the source from whence it springs, and he will do all in his power to induce the chamber to adopt it. We have all the time, then, that we require to make a diversion.'

'What do you mean by that?' said D' Auterive.

'I mean,' replied the old man, 'that you will probably be entrusted by parliament with the search which it purposes to set on foot in the castle of La Roque, and you can conceive, I think, that if this is so, you can mitigate, if not efface, the mischief caused by your indiscretion.'

'Gentlemen,' said D' Auterive, 'I must confess that it will be very difficult to repeat the farce which we have played today. Besides, I had Pierre Couteau to back me this morning, and may the devil seize me, if I comprehend how he has prevented our men from arresting the most furious among you, when you bellowed so at the foot of the stairs, and when you ascended to seize the president. But once at the castle of La Roque, neither he nor I will be able to restrain our brave fellows, who will be eager to reap their reward, for the parliament will not fail to promise a large share of the booty to the men whom it sends on this errand. For my part, I prefer to lose my portion, rather than incur the risk of being hung like a felon in endeavouring to save it.'

'Chevalier D' Auterive,' said the old man who had first questioned him, 'three years ago when you penetrated into our concealment in seeking to discover the nocturnal meetings of Madame de la Roque and Don José, it was I who turned aside the blade which was drawn to despatch you; it was I who proposed to you to become one of us, and confided in your word as a man of honour; I then informed you of the conditions of our association: "death follows the slightest indiscretion!" '

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'It is true, sir,' said the chevalier, 'it is true, I am at your mercy; punish me, if you will; I have broken my pledge, my life is yours!'

'And we must finish with him,' said the man in the garb of a lacquey, casting a lowering glance upon D'Auterive, and making a significant gesture to his comrades, who pressed hurriedly around the young man!

'Forbear!' cried the old man, 'the punishmentof M. D'Auterive must not occupy us now. Forget not, that, to-day, any extraordinary event (and the chevalier's disappearance would be one,) would inevitably excite the attention of parliament. Let us wait until matters take a decided turn. In fact, gentlemen, in supposing that troops will be despatched to the castle of La Roque, I have stated the case in the most unfavourable point of view. It is likely from the manner in which M. de Fourvieres will speak of it that the accusation will be withdrawn.'

'The parliament is upon the track of our association,' replied the man in the dress of a lacquey. 'They are a lynx-eyed race, those gentlemen of the Robe; they will not leave the track until they have followed it to the end. I would give a million to know what is now passing in the chamber of inquest.'

'We shall be informed of all by Belissane, as soon as the sitting is ended,' said the old man.

'That is, if Belissane is not suspected and arrested in open session. These gentlemen of the parliament have expelled the inquisition from Toulouse, but they have inherited its forms and secrecy. You will ruin us with your delays, comte.'

It was the old man who was addressed by this title, and it was the pretended lacquey who thus accosted him:

'I have summoned M. D'Auterive, that he may inform us how much of the truth may have escaped his lips, in order that we may know what is best to be done.'

'*Ma foi*! gentlemen" said D'Auterive, half laughing, half in vexation: 'thus it is. You know Mariette Langlois—she is the prettiest maiden in Toulouse. That she is the daughter of old Langlois, the ugliest and clumsiest ape in Christendom, I do not believe. He has stolen the pretty child from some noble family, that is certain.'

'Proceed, sir, proceed,' interrupted the comte, 'all this is idle.'

'Well, gentlemen, about two months ago I fell in love with Mariette, and I said to myself that the gayest gallant in the city ought to be favoured by the most beautiful maiden.'

The comte assumed an air of sternness, and said, shaking his head:

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'You should have been contented with the most noble, and the most—'

'What mean you, sir?' cried the chevalier, turning pale.

'All shall be explained to you in due time and place. Proceed!'

D'Auterive started backward and replied:

'Not until I know the meaning of the words you have just addressed to me.'

'They mean, sir,' replied the man in the garb of a lacquey, 'to warn you that one of those who belong to us has a secret of which we are ignorant, and he is thus bound to us by every possible tie, if his oath alone is not sufficient to restrain him. We are acquainted with these petty armours, like this of yours with Mariette, but that of which we need to be informed exactly, is what you said three days ago, when you met her by appointment, after leaving vespers, and while you walked with her until nine o'clock upon the ramparts of the gate of Montauban.'

'*Peste*, gentlemen! you are better acquainted with a man's affairs than he himself.'

'Yes, but we are not acquainted with the words, although we are with the actions.'

'Well, gentlemen, the words were these: As I made Mariette the offer of my heart, and fortune, she replied in mockery, that if she had been rightly informed, I promised beyond my ability to perform. I was unwilling to have the lie thrown thus in my teeth, and I told her that if she had need of five hundred louis, I would bring them to her within the hour.'

'"You!" she cried, "the five hundred louis would be forgotten on the way. Besides," she added, "you would do better to pay the thousand livres that you lost last evening at the house of the Duke ——"

'"They are paid, my beauty," I said.

'"And you have five hundred louis left?"

'"Twice that."

'"You have a mine of gold at your disposal, then?"

'"Almost," I said, laughing.

'"And in what country is it situated?" she resumed, in the same tone.

'"In Peru."

'"Or, *almost*," she said.

'The manner in which she uttered those words, startled me.

'"Wherever it is," I replied, "matters little, provided that the five hundred louis reach you."

'"Well, then," she said, "I will expect them."

'I returned home, provided myself with the money, and went at once to Mariette's. A supper had been prepared, and I must own that I was astonished at the freedom with which this maiden entertained a lover in her father's house.'

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'A lever!' said the pretended lacquey, with a sneer, 'you are trifling with us, chevalier! Tell the simple truth, if you please; it is a matter of life or death. You went thither, you supped, you drank much, and you prated more.'

'*Pardieu*!' cried D'Auterive, "it is probable, then, that you know what I said better than I do myself.'

'You said, when you heaped promise upon promise, to soften the beautiful Mariette, that she had but to wish, and you knew of a certain castle where taffetas, laces and diamonds were manufactured, and where all was at your disposal, and when she laughed at the existence of this marvellous castle, you told her that it was the castle of La Roque.'

'It is true,' said D'Auterive, 'and heaven only knows what made me prate thus, for after the third glass of wine I was completely bewildered.'

'And at the sixth, you slept like a log upon the sofa,' said the one who was addressed by the title of comte.

'It was treachery, then?' said the chevalier.

'Without doubt,' replied the comte, 'and that proves,' he added, turning to the pretended lacquey, 'that information had been given from some other quarter. The meeting with Mariette was a thing arranged. They wished to confirm suspicions which were already excited.'

'But how is it that these suspicions were directed towards the chevalier?' said the false lacquey.

'As they were directed towards Barati,' replied the comte, 'from seeing the one make purchases of lands, and the other live beyond his acknowledged resources. As concerns Barati, however, they are mistaken; his unknown fortune does not come from our workshop."

'May the devil confound me!' rejoined the chevalier, 'if all this does not appear to me like a game of Blind man's buff? How happens it, I pray you, gentlemen, that if the parliament suspects Barati, it has sent him to La Roque, to discover what is passing there.'

'I will tell you,' said the false lacquey, 'for I see that your indiscretion has betrayed yourself alone, and that our affair had already been disclosed.'

'It is useless,' said the comte, 'the chevalier need not know more. Now that the papers are doubtless in our possession, the councillor may fare as God pleases. As to you, M. D'Auterive, here are three thousand louis; ten thousand more will be placed in your hands within a week, if it is possible, and public rumour will inform you if it is so.—Conceal your money for a while. Happily for you, you have a vice which will prove your best defence, and the chances of play will explain your extravagances. Besides, the protection of the duchess will suffice to save you. It is time to separate. Had you been treacherous, you would not leave this house alive.

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You have been heedless; you are pardoned. But forget not that you belong to us still, and that our motto is always true: "*Speech is silver, but silence is gold* !"'

To these words, of themselves sufficiently explicit, the comte added a glance which was still more so, and which would have terrified a man less intrepid than the young officer. He took the three thousand louis, and went from the house without remarking that one of the silent actors in this scene had left it a moment before him, at an almost imperceptible sign from the man who was dressed as a lacquey.

D'Auterive had not proceeded twenty paces, when a man of lofty stature, who did not appear to see him, came rudely in contact with him. The collision was so violent that it completely stupified the chevalier; he would have assaulted the ruffian who had jostled him, and whose mien was familiar to him, but the man was now at a good distance. D'Auterive then felt that he had received a wound in the breast. He put his hand to the place, and withdrew it covered with blood. Enraged at this public assault, he would have pursued the man, who had doubtless been suborned to assassinate him. But he had scarcely proceeded thirty paces when he fell to the ground. Still, as he fell, he could see some one approach him, gaze upon him as he lay stretched upon the earth, and he heard him mutter, 'The deed is done! I was warned of it.'

At the same instant D'Auterive lost all consciousness.

As this accident happened in a retired part of the city, it is probable that the young officer remained for some time unobserved where he had fallen; he was aroused from his swoon by the sound of voices. He felt himself lifted up, and carried in the arms of these persons, and while in this state of stupor he could distinguish the cry of 'Fire! fire!' which resounded from one street to the other. Upon opening his eyes, he saw the house which he had just left wrapped in flames. From the sudden violence of the conflagration it seemed certain, not only that the fire had been kindled intentionally, but that everything had been arranged to cause it to spread with a fury and rapidity likely to render all efforts to extinguish it entirely useless.

These cries, this tumult, this thought passed before him like a dream; then he fell back into a swoon again.

CHAPTER XIII.

When D'Auterive returned to himself, he recognised the apartment in which he lay, a *boudoir*, into which he had been often admitted, and which formed part of a small house which was situated not far from the spot where he had been wounded. A female whom he also knew, was sitting at the foot of his bed.

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'How did I come here?' he said, gazing around, to assure himself that he was not deceived.

'Hush! M. D'Auterive,' said the female. 'For your health's sake, do not exert yourself to speak. And believe me,' she added, in a low voice, 'if you do not wish the work completed, which was begun by the man who struck you to the ground a few hours ago, feign to be in the agonies of death. Woman's pity, and above all, the pity of her grace the duchess, is of a capricious nature; although, notwithstanding her anger at his infidelities, she might be terrified at the sight of her lover's blood, when he lay stretched in the street, forsaken by all; yet if she finds him safe and sound, and disposed to play the gallant, she might easily suffer certain people to rid her of so indiscreet a lover.'

'*Parbleu!* my pretty Rosine,' said the chevalier, 'I think it will be unnecessary for your mistress to make a second trial; for, to judge of something of the same sort, which I received from a Spanish gentleman, I believe my business done. Be a good girl, then, and a good Christian; give me a little paper and ink, that I may put my affairs in order, and fetch me a priest to do the same for my conscience.'

'Silence! silence, sir! I am directed to warn those who are here, as soon as you give the slightest signs of life; and there is a man among them, who does not look as if he were disposed to afford you the benefit of clergy, any more than that of the faculty.'

'You can at least tell me how I was brought here.'

'Oh, *mon Dieu*, nothing is more simple. Her grace, the duchess, as she entered here by stealth, saw you as you lay stretched upon the ground; and you looked so pale—so death-like, that it touched her heart, and she sent me to have you taken up, and carried into my house. From thence, you were borne through the little gate at the foot of the garden, and so to this house, which, as you know, is thought to be uninhabited.'

'Ah, ha!' said D'Auterive, raising himself with difficulty upon his bed, 'the duchess came, then, to your house, Rosine—to the innkeeper's wife, who is so skilful in weaving the chains of love. Yet she had no appointment there with me. She came, then, for another!'

The female, to whom this question was directed, appeared greatly embarrassed, and replied:

'M. D'Auterive, a woman like her grace, the duchess, has more than one mystery to conceal. Be silent, and do not question me. But, I repeat it, do not bear yourself proudly, nor seem to brave her; I have never seen her in such a state.'

As Rosine uttered these words, a woman of about thirty-eight years of age, of a magnificent figure, commanding beauty,

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and features haughty and passionate, half-opened the door, and said, in an anxious tone:

'Well, have his senses returned?'

'Not yet, madam,' replied Rosine.

'Perfectly,' said D'Auterive, raising his voice, 'and he is very desirous of leaving this place, if he is to leave it, or have the matter ended, if he is to remain.'

The lady whom D'Auterive thus addressed, advanced to the bedside, and made a sign to Rosine. The latter left the chamber, and the Duchess de Nevres remained alone with the chevalier.

'Gaston,' she said, taking a seat in front of him, 'you have basely deceived me.'

'I asked for a confessor a moment since, Leonore,' said D'Auterive, 'and I do not see that they are disposed to grant me one. I will confess to you, then, and I pray you to repeat my confession to a priest, who will absolve me by posthumous grace, I hope.'

'You jest, D'Auterive, but you do wrong; that which I have to say to you is serious—more serious than you think, perhaps.'

'What is there, then, more serious than death, of which I am thinking at this moment, as you see?'

'You will not die of your wound, Gaston; the surgeon who dressed it has declared that it is not dangerous.'

'And am I to think this good news that you bring me, Leonore?' said D'Auterive, unable to disguise his satisfaction at what he heard.

'The news will prove as you please to have it. That depends upon the answers you give me.'

'And as my answers will be according to your questions, I think you ought to know whether it is good or evil.'

'Gaston,' resumed the duchess, 'you hold in your hands my honour, my life, and perhaps the honour and the lives of twenty of the most illustrious families of France.'

'As to your honour, Leonore, I know that it is in my hands; and it would be safe there, but for the existence of a band of sorcerers, who know all that happens, and who seemed to allude, not long since, to a secret that I believed unknown to the whole world.'

'I know what you mean, Gaston; I was in that house when they questioned you; I heard the reproaches that were made to you.'

'In that case, you know as much as I do, Leonore, of all my infidelities. As for myself, I wish to learn to whom I am indebted for the poignard-stroke, which struck me to the earth.'

'Gaston,' replied the Duchess de Nevres, 'you deserved

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death for having betrayed the secret of those men, who, for many years, have furnished you with more money than would have enriched a prince. Still they were willing to pardon you; but there was one of the number, who feared lest he who thus heedlessly divulged the secret of his fortune, might as heedlessly betray the secret of his love; and this one has directed that the law should be meted out to you.'

'The law!' said D'Auterive, with savage scorn; 'that is to say, six inches of steel. I think I can divine the charitable soul who has so justly condemned me. Thanks, Leonore.'

'D'Auterive! D'Auterive!' replied the duchess, disdainfully, 'this blow, had it come from my hand, would have been inflicted justly; but another has undertaken to avenge me.'

'A successor?' said the chevalier.

'Ah, Gaston!' cried the duchess, with an expression of alarm, 'we are upon the brink of a precipice! D'Auterive, you do not comprehend, then, that all is discovered?'

'*Ma foi*, Leonore,' said the chevalier, 'since this morning I have lived in a world of illusions, of mystery, of folly, of which I comprehend nothing. I answer you as if I found no cause for surprise in what you have just told me. And still you were in that house when they questioned me, and when some one condemned me to undergo the law of this mysterious society, into which I was enrolled in my own despite. Are you a member of it, then?'

'If you had listened to me more attentively, D'Auterive,' said the duchess, while a blush covered her cheeks, 'you would have heard me tell you, that you hold in your hands, not only my honour, but that of more than twenty of the noblest families in France.'

'Yes, yes, I remember,' said the chevalier, turning pale—'I remember that you said something of that sort, but—I confess—all this seems so confus—'

He breathed a heavy sigh, his eyes closed, and he murmured:

'I told you truly, Leonore, that your last message of love was mortal!'

'Gaston! Gaston!' cried the duchess, bending over him.

He had fallen again into a swoon. She called, and Rosine entered. Three men followed her; the one in the garb of a lacquey—he who had been addressed by the title of comte—and a third, who was clothed entirely in black. The latter was the first to speak.

'Well, what have you learned?'

'Nothing. You see!' said the duchess, with an expression of mingled grief and anger.

The man in black approached the bed, and having felt the chevalier's pulse, he shook his head thoughtfully.

'I told you that it was possible to save him, but only if he

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were left completely undisturbed. His wound does not seem to be serious, but he has been so greatly agitated, that he may die in one of those swoons.'

'What matters a moment of repose to one condemned! the chevalier must speak,' said the false lacquey. 'Come, doctor, you must have some powerful means to restore this man to consciousness. Give him strength for half-an-hour, and then he may die.'

'Brother,' said the duchess, addressing this man, 'you are too cruel!'

And big drops fell from her eyes as she gazed upon D'Autesive, who now breathed again.

The false lacquey did not heed the duchess' grief; he cried eagerly to the surgeon:

'There! he is coming to himself, doctor; employ all your skill, and give him a little life for an hour, a half-hour, ten minutes—that will do!'

The surgeon took a flask from his pocket and poured a few drops between the patient's lips.

'It is your fault, monseigneur,' said the comte to the pretended lacquey; 'it was you who directed this blow against the chevalier.'

'He had deserved it, sir; and besides, do you think I would leave my sister's honour in the keeping of a babbler like this?'

The comte shrugged his shoulders, and he whom he had addressed by the title of monseigneur, added, with increasing violence:

'And then were we not sure that the papers had been removed from Barati's?'

'Vergnes had been entrusted with this duty, sir, and he alone was sufficiently familiar with the localities of Barati's house, to be able to find them. Besides, you were of the party, and you saw Vergnes enter the apartment.'

'Yes, I saw him enter, while we carried off the president; but it was you, sir, who answered for the fidelity of this man.'

'Demand an account of his fidelity from her grace, the duchess, for it was at her orders that he returned with me from the castle of La Roque, to undertake this business.'

'Are you sure of this man, Leonore?'

'He has either been arrested, or he is dead, or he has done what he promised,' replied the duchess.

'We should have burned Barati's house, as we burned that in which we held our meetings. That was my advice, sir; all would then have been buried in ruins.'

'In open day, and how?'

'Why, you have eyes for nothing, then!' replied the pretended lacquey. 'How! they have had time to inform against the association, to deliberate in parliament, in which one of

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ours holds a seat, and you have not had time to take the precautions necessary to our safety?'

'Monseigneur, Belissane will tell you what has passed, and you will then understand that we have done everything that it was in our power to do.'

'But Belissane does not make his appearance.'

'The parliament is still in session, monseigneur.'

'We must wait for him, then, for the chevalier can tell us nothing.'

'He remained at the councillor's after us, and he knows, perhaps, what has become of Vergnes.'

'He did not know him.'

'He at least knew him well enough to let him enter. It was you, Comte, who arranged this affair, and it seems to me quite suspicious.'

'Monseigneur,' replied the comte, 'such a suspicion expressed toward a man like myself, cannot be ended by strokes of a poignard, as with the chevalier; it is an insult for which you should account to me, except for the office which protects you.'

'Brother!—M. de Frias!' cried the duchess, 'is this a time to settle points of honour, now, when we are in danger of public disgrace?'

'But we cannot remain longer in this suspense,' said the duchess' brother. 'Is this house, even, perfectly safe?'

'I think so,' replied the duchess, with an air of alarm.

'We have all lost our senses,' said her brother. 'They have seen the chevalier carried wounded into the inn of this Vergnes; and if the parliament wishes to secure him, it will, in one way or another, discover where he is: not finding him in Vergnes' house, they will seek for him about the premises, and will light, perhaps, upon the secret passage which leads to this building.'

'Monseigneur,' said the surgeon at this moment, 'the chevalier's senses are returning.'

'Well, then, Leonore, question him, and make him speak; your follies must at least serve us in something. To the devil with women and their amours! They ruin everything!'

The duchess made a sign of assent. The pride which usually dwelt upon her face was lost in an expression of terrible anxiety. At a new sign, the other personages retired from the scene, and withdrew into a corner of the apartment.

CHAPTER XIV.

The chevalier unclosed his eyes, and beheld the duchess still seated at his bedside.

'You have not left me, Leonore,' he said, 'it is well; I thank you!'

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'Gaston,' replied the duchess, 'I would fain save you, for I love you!'

'Let us be silent of that, Leonore. I approach a moment when we recal these follies only to implore pardon for them from heaven. But you said that I held in my hands the honour of your name, and of some of the most noble families. By my soul's welfare, I do not understand you. Explain it to me clearly, deliberately; I will try to comprehend what you say.'

'D'Auterive,' said the duchess, 'do you know the man who organized the association of which you are a member?'

'I know *him*, only, whom, a while since, I heard addressed by the title of comte; I know Belissane, Doctor Lambert, and the fat financier, Lavardiere, who furnishes me with funds when my purse is low. You know better than any one that I had no idea that you were mingled up in all this.'

'This is impossible, D'Auterive, for this very day you have been entrusted with a commission which is very singular in your position. Listen to me attentively. Langlois' daughter, or the most beautiful girl in Toulouse, if you like this phrase better, has been instructed by the President de Fourvieres, whose mistress she is—'

'You believe it?' said the chevalier, with an air of vexation.

'I am sure of it, chevalier. She was instructed by the president to find out if you had any knowledge of a society, which they have been striving to trace out for the last week. As you have been told, it was your foolish extravagance which drew their attention upon you; and the manner in which you have pursued this girl, induced the President de Fourvieres to set this snare for you. Now, with the suspicions which he already entertained, your heedless words concerning the manufactory of taffetas and of diamonds at the castle of La Roque, was no slight hint for him.'

'I understand you, Leonore, but the devil take me if I should ever have imagined that they could make use of a pretty girl and a cavalier's caprice, to help them ply the stupid trade of a spy.'

The duchess smiled bitterly, and gazed at D'Auterive with a singular expression of pity and of tenderness.

'Poor Gaston!' she said, 'what a child you are! But no matter. Well, M. de Fourvieres was looking about for the means to push his inquiries farther, when the shepherds of the mountain presented their complaint against your uncle, the Baron de la Roque. The president had hitherto been secretly at work, in order to reserve for himself the honour of this important discovery; so that when it was decided to send a member of the parliament to the castle to investigate the affair, Barati offered his services without the least suspi-

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cion of the existence of any secret association, and Belissane supported him, although Barati was far from divining the motive which induced him to do so.

'It would take too much time to explain to you the causes of this proceeding, but I can tell you simply, that we were in possession of the means to make Barati say what suited us, in case he made any discovery. While M. de Fourvieres, impelled by his bitter hatred toward Barati, supported this choice also, he contrived to associate with him his instrument, Master Langlois, whom he entrusted with a secret mission to watch every step of his enemy. This was the explanation which the president gave to Belissane after the departure of the councillor, whose purchases of land, exceeding, as they did, the limits of his acknowledged fortune, and whose eagerness to undertake the mission to La Roque, which was prompted by a simple desire to distinguish himself, appeared suspicious to the president. Either he is connected with the society of La Roque, he thought, and if this is the case, he will reveal nothing, or he is ignorant of it, and then he will discover nothing. In the former case, this mission will be the means of ruining him with certainty; for, being in the midst of his accomplices, he will be led into some interviews and some acts, of which Langlois will render me an account. In the latter case, I have the chance of destroying him, by interpreting his silence as a proof of his guilt. At any rate, he will be unable to escape the reproach of incapacity, when he has in person visited the seat of this culpable association without making the slightest discovery.'

'These are the schemes of a paltroon,' said D'Auterive, 'but how have you learned all this?'

'On the very morning of Barati's departure, M. de Fourvieres imparted to the chamber, over which he presides, his suspicion concerning the existence of the society of La Roque; yet without referring to you, since, had he done so, he would have been obliged to mention the means which had been employed to draw the secret from you.'

'But how could he avoid mentioning the source of his original suspicions, for such he must have had since he contrived a plan to make me prate.'

'That is a fact which has eluded all our enquiries, and perhaps you can assist us in discovering it.'

'I see no probability of it,' said D'Auterive. 'No matter, proceed Leonore.'

The chevalier breathed a heavy sigh, and added:

'Draw nearer, that I may hear you more easily, for I suffer great pain.'

A tear started to the eye of the duchess; she seated herself upon the bed, and bending over him, she said in a low and hurried voice:

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'It was not I, Gaston, I swear it.'

And at the same moment she placed her finger upon her lips, and cast a glance upon him, as if to inform him that some one was listening to their discourse.

'I will proceed,' resumed the duchess, quickly. 'Belissane, on hearing this terrible revelation, feigned to be delighted, and opposed the general opinion of the chamber, which seemed disposed to decide that the president had not acted in accordance with his duty. He sustained him with all his eloquence, which is said to be very powerful, and it was by this means that he obtained the confidence of M. de Fourvieres, who, after the session, informed him of the snare in which he had taken you.'

The duchess gazed at Gaston with increased tenderness, and said:

'At that moment, your life was forfeited, and still the person who interposed in your behalf, was more than any one else entitled to take revenge.'

A glance of gratitude was the sole reply of the chevalier. The duchess continued, holding one of the sufferer's hands in hers.

'Belissane, thus warned, and fearful lest chance might reveal something to Barati, despatched a courier to the Comte, who was then at La Roque, in the vast subterranean vaults that lie beneath the castle, and charged him to arrange matters in such a manner as to impose silence upon the councillor, if he discovered or suspected the least thing. And, but for the extravagance of your uncle, it would have been the easiest matter in the world.'

'What did he do then!' said D'Auterive.

The duchess briefly narrated the events which had occurred at the castle, and with which our readers are already acquainted; she then added:

'If Barati had been placed in a suitable chamber, they could easily have found access to him, and without tricks or conjurations could have warned him to keep silence, not concerning what he had discovered, for he had discovered nothing, but concerning the conduct of the baron, which, by compelling the parliament to avenge the insult which it had received, might lead to a search in the castle. In this state of things, it was necessary to have recourse to the aid of spectres, and this led to an explanation between your uncle and Barati, the object of which, as Langlois imagined, was to arrange the best means for protecting the association.

'The error of the Comte was in sparing this Langlois, whom Belissane has denounced as a spy upon Barati's movements. He was fearful lest his disappearance might lead to a strict investigation. But no sooner had the wretch arrived at Toulouse than he repaired to M. de Fourvieres, and related

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all that had occurred at your uncle's castle. It was natural enough that the baron's first resistance and subsequent submission, the readiness with which Barati forgot the insult which he had received as a member of the parliament, and the silence which he seemed to have enjoined upon Langlois, should, in the eyes of the president, appear like the connivance of two accomplices who had recognised each other.'

'Leonore,' said D'Auterive with a smile, 'you talk of business as glibly as a flat-cap, and I admire your clearness in the midst of the danger which surrounds us.'

'Gaston, as I have told you, all the infamy that can fall upon a noble house, now totters over our heads, and I will not perish, and suffer the honour of my name to perish with me, without essaying every means of defence.'

'Proceed,' said D'Auterive; 'this is a singular story, and one far better worth listening to than mine.'

'Well then,' resumed the duchess, 'no sooner was M. de Fourvieres informed of what had passed at the castle of La Roque, than he convened the chamber of inquest in all haste. Full credit was given, as you can imagine, to the report of Langlois, when, at the hour appointed, Barati failed to make his appearance. Then, in open session, it was resolved to send some one to the councillor's to interrogate him, and to secure his papers. Belissane gave us warning of it, and sent word directing me to manage it so that one of *ours* should command the escort. In the meanwhile the Comte, who had left La Roque, and who had arrived almost at the same time with Barati, repaired to his house, but he was not admitted. He left a billet for him, but as on returning he saw M. de Fourvieres' carriage drive up to the councillor's, he feared that Barati would not have time to remove the fatal casket, and he at once set about organizing that riot, of which you were a witness, while my brother made arrangements to carry off the president.'

'Your brother?' cried D'Auterive, 'Monseigneur de St. Croix?'

The duchess, who had been hurried away by the rapidity of her narrative, turned pale, and appeared agitated at this interruption. A glance of despair admonished D'Auterive of the imprudence of which she had been guilty in thus naming her brother, and of his still greater imprudence in remarking it.

'I did not say my brother,' resumed the duchess. 'Listen to me, I pray you, without interruption. I had received word that it was necessary that one of *ours* should command the escort of the president and, in truth, knowing the snare into which you had fallen, I should not have thought of you; the comte came to tell me that it was too late, and that M. de Fourvieres was already at Barati's. I despatched one of our

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number to learn the name of the officer who had been chosen, and you may judge of my surprise at hearing that it was you; how M. de Fourvieres could have consented to your appointment, I am at a loss to understand, unless he hoped to take you in the same net with Barati. Well, you were there! you remember how the man whom you now know under the title of comte, warned you through Pierie Couteau of the object of that visit; you saw the president caried off, you saw Vergnes, Rosine's husband, enter Barati's apartment, and you must be able to give us some information which will enable us to discover the casket which he was charged to remove.'

D'Auterive raised himself somewhat in his bed, and replied in a firm voice:

'Yes, *pardieu*! and I have seen him elsewhere,' he muttered. 'I begin to comprehend.'

'What would you?' said Leonore, laying her hands on his arm to prevent him from rising.

'*Morbleu*, madam, your surgeon is an ass, and I have no thoughts of dying of this wound. Only I had no objection to feign myself nearly dead, that they might not take the trouble to finish with me, and I know very well all that has been said here during my pretended swoon. You can step forth from behind the curtain, Monseigneur de St. Croix, although the habit of a lacquey becomes you far less than the cassock of a bishop, and you, likewise, Comte de Frias, who, as my uncle thinks, lie buried in eternal sleep, in the cellar into which he hurled you, come forth!'

The persons whom D'Auterive addressed, at once stepped forward, and the chevalier continued:

'In the first place, will you have the goodness to explain to me the end which you had in view by the abduction of M. de Fourvières, and the errand of the individual who entered Barati's apartment?'

'M. de Fourvières was carried off,' said the Bishop de St. Croix, in a harsh tone, 'because it was his intention to remain at the councillor's after your departure, in order to make a search, and find, if possible, some traces of Barati's connection with us.'

'*Diable*! monsiegneur,' replied D'Auterive, 'you take your precautions well. What had you to fear from this search, since Barati was not one of yours or of ours rather?'

'He had in his house, though he did not suspect it, some papers which could destroy us.'

'And these are the papers which Rosine's honest husband was charged to remove?'

'Yes.'

'And what are these papers, I pray you.'

'I see no objection to informing you. They are the docu-

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ments of our association?' said the chevalier, in extreme astonishment.

'And which you have signed, sir,' said the bishop.

'What?' exclaimed D'Auterive, 'that register to which they made me affix my signature on page 121. I remember the number, *pardieu*! I was sufficently admonished to do so. This register'—

'Contains also the signature of every member of the association. Every leaf is folded and sealed in such a manner that the persons who are admitted are acquainted with those who admitted them, and perhaps with three or four more besides.'

'And it is this register that has not been found?' cried D'Auterive.

'It is, Gaston!' said the duchess. 'Your name, my brother's, the names of these gentlemen are there, and many that we do not know, as you did not know ours.'

'But how can I enlighten you concerning the fate of this register?' rejoined Auterive.

'There are many others in Toulouse besides ourselves, who are interested in its removal. If we had had time, we should have chosen an officer who was in our interest to accompany the president. You were appointed; he then, who proposed you, had doubtless the same intent with us; therefore if you would name him, we could obtain new information. Did not some one designate you expressly?'

'And if it were so,' said D'Auterive, 'he must be in the same dilemma with you, since Vergnes has not found this precious casket.'

'Vergnes entered Barati's apartment,' said the Bishop de St. Croix, 'he, or one of ours, for he ascended the stairs with us, after having pronounced the secret word; this man has since left the house, for I met him as our carriage turned into the deserted street, which bounds Barati's garden, from the walls of which he had just escaped. It was Vergnes, was it not, sister? Without doubt, he has removed the papers, but we do not know what has become of him.'

'You do not know what has become of him?' cried D'Auterive, in an angry tone. 'It is impossible!'

'Upon my honour!' said the duchess.

D'Auterive reflected a moment, and then resumed, in a more careless tone:

'You do not, Leonore? It may be so; but how the devil do you expect me to tell you more than you know of him yourselves?'

'Because as he was acquainted with a greater number of the associates than we, he has gone, perhaps, to place the papers in the hands of some other member, in the hands of him

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who designated you to accompany M. de Fourvieres, and if we knew who that one was, we should be more tranquil.'

The chevalier, who had not remarked the entrance of the man who had thrust aside Barati, imagined that he who had been charged with the duty of removing the papers, had been unable to accomplish his errand, and was persuaded that Clemence must have secured them, and after a new silence, he resumed:

'Answer me frankly and without evasion; perhaps I may be able to reassure you more completely. How is it that the papers were at Barati's?'

'They were deposited there five years ago, as it seems; we do not know by whom: we do not know wherefore. It was not until yesterday that we were warned to secure them in one way or other. In other respects our instructions were precise; we were told the place where they were to be found, and the shape of the casket which contained them.'

'A casket covered with shagreen, was it not?'

'Yes!' exclaimed the comte and Monseigneur de St. Croix with one voice.

'Placed upon the upper shell of Barati's bookcase?'

'Yes.'

D'Auterive suffered an exclamation to escape him, but as if a remnant of doubt still agitated him, he merely answered:

'Well, then, be at ease, I know that this casket has been removed by some one, but it was neither Vergnes nor any of those to whom you refer.'

'And have you any idea who this person is?'

'Yes, in truth, but I cannot tell you. And it will be necessary for me to find the person myself,' said D'Auterive, who was unwilling to name Clemence.

'You believe him to be secure against all inquiry?'

D'Auterive appeared anxious, and replied:

'I do not think it possible that any one can suspect him, and he will have sufficient prudence, I believe, to place the casket beyond the reach of danger.'

'It is probable,' said the comte, 'for if he has been charged with this mission, he must be acquainted with the contents of these papers, and as his life is at stake doubtless, as well as ours, he must have destroyed them, unless he has been able to conceal them safely.'

'God grant it!' said the duchess.

'As to his being one of *ours*, I doubt it,' said D'Auterive, 'but I will answer for him that he is incapable of treachery, although I never knew him until to-day.'

'You know him then?' said the bishop, harshly. 'I would give half my fortune to see this casket again, and to know who it is that holds us in his power.'

'*Ma foi!*' said D'Auterive, who was disturbed by a new fear,

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and was anxious to leave the house on any terms, 'I think that you may sleep in peace, as I should do if I were at home, for I am not likely to do it here.'

'You are too weak to return to your dwelling,' said Dr. Lambert, who had listened to this discourse, without manifesting, in the slightest degree, the anxiety which agitated the others.

'Besides,' said the duchess, 'you are here under my safeguard; you have nothing now to fear from any one.'

'Yet I should like something more positive respecting the condition of our affairs,' said D'Auterive, 'for thus far, scarcely a name has been mentioned except my own,' he added, raising himself upon his bed.

'Your name is known only to M. de Fourvieres, who will be silent,' said the bishop, 'and to Belissane, who is one of *ours*.'

'*Diable*,' said D'Auterive, 'you have strange means, it seems, to render every body silent.'

'Where is the man,' said the bishop, 'in the history of whose life there is not some act which he would conceal, and which those who know of it, can use to terrify him?'

'You have none, then, scored to my account, monseigneur, since you have resorted to a poignard stroke to render me silent, for it was not Vergnes' fault if the blow did not kill me outright.'

'Vergnes! say you, sir? It was not Vergnes who struck you.'

'It was he, I swear it; I knew him well.'

'It is not possible, sir; it must have been another!' cried the bishop.

A man in the habit of a boatman of the Garonne entered the apartment.

'What took place when I despatched you in pursuit of the chevalier?'

'When I overtook him, sir, the work was done, and so thoroughly, as it seemed, that there was no need of my lending a hand to it.'

All present looked upon each other with an air of stupifaction, and even D'Auterive seemed dismayed, as if he had just made some terrible discovery. Still he did not speak; he gazed upon the duchess with a strange mingling of alarm and compassion, while Monseigneur de St. Croix exclaimed:

'Another, then, has directed this chastisement.'

'Leonore,' said the chevalier, 'I am a man of but slight importance, and they will stick at nothing to get me out of the way. But, *pardieu*! I will not die thus without securing my own vengeance and your safety.'

'But if the duchess is in danger,' said the bishop, 'the same peril threatens us, and you must speak out before us all.'

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'You, gentlemen, have probably nothing to fear,' replied D'Auterive, 'and if I should name to you the man whom I suspect, the man who has as great an interest as ourselves in the destruction of these papers, you would easily comprehend that, except myself and the duchess, the safety of no one here present is endangered.'

'Gaston,' cried the duchess, as a ray of light flashed across her mind at these words, 'could it be—'

The same thought seemed to occur to all present, for each one exclaimed:

'He!'

But all stopped ere they pronounced the name or the title of the unknown chief of the association; they gazed one upon the other, as if to inquire whether each had the same suspicion, when, on a sudden, the man called Vergnes entered hastily, followed by an individual of about fifty years of age, of lofty stature, and of a stern, haughty, and menacing visage; he was wrapped in a long mantle, which he threw quickly aside, while Vergnes said in a low voice:

'This is the nest, monseigneur!'

CHAPTER XVI.

At the sight of her husband, (for it was he who had just entered,) the Duchess de Nevres sank upon the bed on which D'Auterive lay stretched, while the remaining actors in the scene appeared as if stricken by lightning, and cast a glance upon the chevalier, as if to implore his aid. The latter, on the contrary, suffered a smile of triumph to play upon his lips, and he endured without the slightest symptom of alarm, the stern and menacing glance which the Duke de Nevres cast upon him. Uncertain whether Clemence had secured the papers in question, or whether Vergnes had anticipated her, D'Auterive felt that he had no chance of safety against the twofold danger that now menaced him, except to excite the duke's fears by pretending to be in possession of the casket, and by threatening to make such use of it as would include him in the common ruin which now impended over the association. He looked him in the face, therefore, with impertinent irony, and bowed slightly.

The duke de Nevres, who, from his name and rank, was accustomed to see every one tremble before him, reached his hand to the hilt of his sword, as if to unsheath it, but he paused on hearing the voice of D'Auterive, who cried in a tone of mockery:

'Ah, ha! monseigneur, you think, then, that you will finish the business better than that scoundrel Vergnes! There is no need of such haste, my lord duke; there are

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more people of your acquaintance here than you think, perhaps.'

The duke controlled his impatience, and turning to his wife, said, in a firm and imperative tone:

'Madam, you will this evening enter the Convent of the Benedictines, never to leave it. You, my brother, will, this same evening, resign the episcopal authority into the hands of the Archbishop of Toulouse, who will name to you the place in which his holiness requires you to do penance for the unexampled crime of which you have been guilty. As to you, gentlemen, your business has been judged in full session, and you may commend your souls to God.'

'That is to say,' cried D'Auterive, 'that we are to be butchered here like dogs, and that in an hour, probably, this house will be burned to the ground, as the other was this morning, that no trace of your atrocities may remain, my lord duke.'

The duke's brow grew still more lowering, and he replied:

'Chevalier, I would I could invent new tortures, that you might die a death such as you merit.'

'And wherefore, monseigneur, do I merit such a death. Is it because I have not yet repeated to these gentlemen the name of the principal accomplice of our society?'

The duke stood silent for a moment, and then replied:

'It will suffice that the law is informed of it, and they will learn who he is from its sentence.'

'That is by no means probable, monseigneur,' said the chevalier, 'for you vouchsafe him a protection so peculiar, that, instead of being butchered like myself, or shut up in a convent, to do penance, like the Bishop de St. Croix and the duchess, it is he who condemns as well as executes.'

'You are mad, fool!' said the duke, with an emotion which he was unable to disguise, 'I do not comprehend you.'

'Ah, you comprehend me well, monseigneur! 'Chevalier,' you said to me this morning, "they require of me a trusty officer to execute a foolish arrest for a silly affair, touching the dignity of the parliament. As I have some reason to conciliate the good-will of these gentlemen, if it were only for my suit against the Riquets, I will grant their request. But, as, on the other hand, I am somewhat indebted to Barati for services which he has rendered me in time past, tell him secretly, and in my name, to burn some papers which were placed in his hands about five years ago, and which might compromise him. They will be found in a casket covered with shagreen, placed on the upper shelf of Barati's bookcase." Now, I was disposed to obey you, monseigneur, but I was unable, for I could not deliver my message to Barati under the very eyes of the president; I could not even make him a sign, but I secured these papers.'

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'You!' cried the duke, turning pale, and casting a glance of alarm at Vergnes, who hung his head.

'D'Auterive saw at once that the duke had been deceived, and that Vergnes had not succeeded in removing the casket, as he had doubtless asserted.

'Oh, resumed the chevalier, 'I saw master Vergnes enter the apartment, and I plainly heard the pass-word, "*Speech is silver, but silence is gold,*" which he whispered in my ear as he ascended the stairs, but the business was done, although I did not suspect that this was his errand to the councillor's; the idea did not even strike me with the poignard-thrust which he dealt me on your part, doubtless.'

The duke cast his eyes to the ground. D'Auterive continued:

'But I confess to you that within the last hour, since I have questioned my friends here, I begin to comprehend the interest you take in the destruction of these papers.'

The duke raised his eyes as if about to question him, but D'Auterive continued in a tone of increased impertinence:

'But as to these papers, they are under my control, now, monseigneur, for they are in the hands of a person who will deliver them, not to Belissane, nor to any other like him, but to some member of the parliament, who has a strong desire to humble your severity and your insolence, my lord duke; and we shall see then, if, notwithstanding your title as governor of the province, notwithstanding your high birth, you will not, at last, mount the stool of the vilest criminal—you, who have granted your protection to a band of coiners, who have deluged Spain, Genoa, Venice, all the Levant, and even the Indies, with false and worthless money. For all of us are but counterfeiters, and condemned by law to the gallows.'

The chevalier might have continued in this strain still longer. The duke seemed sunk in the deepest dejection. The rigidity of his face contrasted strangely with the almost convulsive movements of his eyes. He glanced alternately and hurriedly at all present, as if counting them, in order to learn the number of blows which it would be necessary for him to strike. At last, observing the curiosity with which all watched the expression of his features, he closed his eyes as if to escape this scrunity. An entire minute (and this is a long time under such circumstances,) an entire minute passed in fearful silence. Finally, he seemed to have recovered somewhat from his agitation, and affecting a carelessness which was belied by the expression of his compressed lips, he cried:

'So, then! it was for this that the duchess repaired hither, and not, as that wretch declared, for an amorous meeting.'

He looked around for Vergnes, but the latter had disappeared. The duke continued, turning to the duchess:

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'Pardon my mistake, madam. Let us speak no more of it. For the rest, I can inform you that the affair is nearly finished. Fourvieres has declared that he was deceived by false reports, and as care has been taken to fabricate no French coin, and as no one has discovered the slightest traces of the enterprise, the president will pass for a fool. Yet, to give a colour to Barati's arrest, M. de la Roque will be called to an account for having insulted the parliament, and Barati, for not having at once given information against the baron. The latter will be amerced in a fine, which you will pay, chevalier, and the councillor will be reprimanded so gently, that he will have every reason to be satisfied. We will arrange it.'

While he spoke, the duke gradually regained his composure. D'Auterive's glance did not quit him for a moment, and the duchess vainly endeavoured to assume that air of confidence, which becomes a woman so basely accused. The others, relieved from all fears for their personal safety, began to breathe more freely. The duke continued:

'Pardon me, my brother, for the alarm I have caused you. After all, if any one is excusable in this affair, it is you, for you have employed the profits of our enterprise, in embellishing and adorning your cathedral; you have assuredly paid dear for the pardon which heaven owes you. As to myself, you all know, gentlemen, that the greater part of my gains have been employed to serve the vast projects of M. Riquet. M. de Frias, we have an account to settle. We will arrange, at the same time, that of these gentlemen. For the present,' he added, glancing at them in a manner which proved that he was resolved to be obeyed, 'for the present, I beg you to leave me alone with the chevalier; he has been somewhat too prodigal of his louis to a certain Mademoiselle Langlois, and his purse needs replenishing, perhaps. I beg the duchess also, to lend me her advice in this affair; she will remain with us.'

No one present had been duped by the manner in which the duke feigned to look upon the relations of the duchess with the chevalier, after the latter had named him as the chief of this band of counterfeiters. No one, therefore, wished to stand in the way of an explanation, which would probably end in an amicable arrangement, and a promise of mutual forgiveness. Still, the Bishop de St. Croix whispered to his sister:

'We will not leave the house.'

The duke went with them as far as the door. The Comte de Frias here said to him in a low voice:

'Monseigneur, concede nothing until my return.'

On the other hand, D'Auterive raised himself upon his bed, plucked the duchess gently by the robe, and said, hurriedly:

'Try to find me a sword!'

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The duchess, without turning, put her hand to her bosom, then, passing it behind her, reached Gaston a poignard, which he at once seized.

During this hasty movement, the remaining personages of this scene had left the apartment, and the duke, turning towards his wife, perceived the hand of the duchess near that of the chevalier.

'What pledge of love are you giving to your gallant?' he said, in a tone in which the haughtiness of a great lord was blended with the rudeness of a man confident of his personal strength.

D'Auterive raised himself in a sitting posture upon his bed, and showing the poignard to the duke, he replied:

'It is not a pledge of love, monseigneur, but it is a pledge of safety to us both. You were right; we have an account to settle together, and it is well that we can discuss it upon somewhat equal terms, for if you wield a longer weapon, I shall at least, thanks to this steel, have a chance of refusing your conditions, until I have told you ours.'

'Ours?' cried the duke, darkly. 'Do you hear him, madam? The chevalier names your interests in common with his own. Does it please you that it should be so? If it contents you, madam, I consent. You can quit my house to-morrow, for that of D'Auterive, and I swear to you that I will demand an account of him, neither before the parliament, nor at the point of my sword.'

'Duke de Nevres,' said Leonore proudly, 'your proposition is insulting; you know me too well to think that I will submit to voluntary dishonour.'

'Must I submit to it then?' cried the duke. 'Must I receive you in my house? must I honour, before all the world, you, who have dishonoured me? You, on your side, madam, know me too well to think that I will submit to it. The matter cannot terminate thus.'

'Let us hear, then, monseigneur,' said D'Auterive, in a tone of mockery, 'let us hear what you propose.'

'In the first place,' said the Duke de Nevres, 'let us set aside from this discussion, all that relates to the business of the society. You will restore the papers which are in your hands to those whom they concern; this is a sacred duty which you cannot fail to perform. That done, we shall both stand, face to face, free to settle matters as becomes gentlemen in our position.'

'I see no other objection to your proposition, except my ignorance of the mode in which we are to settle matters,' replied D'Auterive. Have the goodness to explain this: I am entirely at your service.'

The duke's features changed at this question, a smile played

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about his lips; he assumed an air of indifference, and said to D'Auterive:

'Chevalier, you are a hair-brained fellow, who, with your five-and-twenty years, have committed those follies which are usual at your age. But you have mistaken for love, the triumph of your vanity, and have said to yourself, that the chief happiness of a gentleman, was to be found in the favour of a dame of noble birth—of a duchess!'

'My lord duke,' said Leonore indignantly, 'From the manner in which you commence, I divine your aim. Take care lest I profit by your example, and in my turn, grant you no mercy.'

'At your pleasure, madam; we are not here to exchange compliments.'

'Suffer monseigneur to proceed,' said D'Auterive dryly. 'What he has thus far said, appears quite reasonable, and if he continues in this strain, we can, perhaps, come to a perfect understanding.'

'What mean you, Gaston?' cried the duchess.

'Chevalier,' resumed the duke, casting a glance of irony upon his wife, 'You have dreamed the dream of all young fools, who are ambitious of intrigues with dames of high rank, and you have beheld your dream realized. You, a poor chevalier, have gained the favour of a duchess; but what is the favour of a duchess when one cannot boast of it? It is not worth that of the meanest peasant girl, with sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks, whom one can parade before all Toulouse. Above all, when the said duchess numbers some forty years, and when she has a son scarcely younger than yourself. It is a net in which a man is vexed to find himself taken, but from which he extricates himself as soon as possible, and I believe, my dear Gaston, that I anticipate your desires in begging you to resign your first and ancient love.

Leonore cast her eyes to the ground as her husband spoke; a burning blush covered her face, and the duke continued:

'I do not say, my dear chevalier, that Leonore does not well affect the airs of a young and simple maiden: you see she blushes admirably—but there is a tint of rage in that dark flush, which is no mark of innocence.'

At these words, a death-like paleness took the place of that blush which mantled upon Leonore's cheeks. Her frame trembled, her hand was stretched convulsively towards the chevalier, and she muttered, in a low voice:

'The poignard! give me the poignard!'

'Listen to monseigneur, madam,' said D'Auterive, drawing back from her, 'all this does not tell us at what he aims.'

'It is this, M. D'Auterive,' said the duke; 'You must give the lie to all idle rumours respecting you both, by at once seeking in marriage the hand of some young maiden who

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pleases you—Langlois's daughter, for example. With her, you must quit Toulouse and France; and, provided that you never cross my path, I promise you to forget a folly that I attribute solely to your extreme youth.'

'That is but reasonable,' said the chevalier. And madam—what is to be her lot?'

'Chevalier,' said the duchess, rising, 'think only of yourself; I shall know how to secure my safety.'

'I know it, madam,' said D'Auterive, in a respectful tone, 'I do not doubt your courage. But even in regard to you, there is something which concerns me personally, in the future intentions of the duke, as well as in the words he has just uttered.'

'And what is it, then, chevalier?' said the Duke de Nevres, laughing. Do you fear lest I should not secure you sufficiently against the amorous claims of your superannuated mistress? Do not be alarmed; the place in which I shall confine her is not one where she can steal out to repair to Rosine's, after having threatened her gallant with the loss of his commission, through the influence of her blear-eyed husband, if he does not keep the appointment. Fear nothing for yourself in the measures that I shall take.'

'You speak amiss, monseigneur,' said D'Auterive, giving way to the anger which flashed in his burning glances; 'you speak amiss, sir; these measures will not protect me; they will insult me.'

'How? said the duke.

'They will insult me, as your words have insulted me.'

'Explain yourself,' cried the duke, in fury.

'You have thought, then, monseigneur, that I would suffer the woman that I loved to be outraged with impunity, and that I know not how to protect her. Culpable in your eyes, she is innocent in mine. You have the right to punish her—it is my duty to defend her. You shall respect her, sir—you shall respect her! You think you have made her blush at her faults; you are deceived, sir! she blushes in my presence, at being the wife of a brute.'

'Chevalier!' cried the duke, drawing his sword.

'Monseigneur,' said D'Auterive, rising from his bed, 'you are better armed than I am, but I am the younger; thanks to your assassins, I am wounded, but my frame is not exhausted by the basest excesses, and the vilest debauchery. The contest may turn against me here, but to-morrow you will be vanquished in your turn; for if I leave this house a corpse, to-morrow your secret crimes will be revealed to the tribunals of the kingdom.'

'You forget that this will implicate the duchess also.'

'Ask her, monseigneur—ask her if she would not prefer

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the infamy of a prison, to the misery of living in dependence upon you.'

'Oh, yes, Gaston!' cried Leonore; 'exile—the scaffold—rather than these insults.'

'You see, monseigneur,' said Gaston; 'and still she does not run this hazard; for if she will but name the number of the leaf upon which her name is written, it shall be torn out.'

'By whom?'

'By me, sir!' said D'Auterive; by me: 'for those who are near us will defend me if I summon them, since they know that my death is their ruin.

'But they know, likewise, that my ruin is theirs also.'

'Well, then, sir, let us treat of affairs seriously, and without rudeness.'

'Is it because I have told you madam's age that I have been rude?'

The duke well knew how sensitive was the spot which he touched, and the duchess trembled anew with rage.

'I knew it, monseigneur,' said D'Auterive; 'how could it be otherwise, when the birth-day of a Princess of Puzzano holds so fair a place in the catalogue of the great names of Europe? It is the misfortune of those of noble birth to be thus publicly known. You yourself have experienced it, since, only after a formal decree, were you recognised as the Duke de Nevres, who averred that a lacquey of your mother's had too much to do with your birth.'

'Chevalier!' cried the Duke de Nevres.

'It is your turn to listen, monseigneur,' said D'Anterive; 'yes, I knew the age of the duchess, but when I saw her, I forgot it.'

The chevalier then assumed an air of courteous gallantry, and added:

'The brightness of her beautiful eyes, the perfection of her features, the admirable proportions of her form, at once effaced from my memory that date which is true only in the book in which it is written, but which becomes false in her presence.'

The duke answered by a disdainful smile, and a glance of contempt which he cast upon his wife.

'And then,' said the chevalier, 'there are secrets of the heart which are never known to a husband who has been imposed upon a woman against her will. Monseigneur, I swear to you that among the fairest, the dearest remembrances of my life, will be the love at which you have just scoffed.—Leonore, no woman can compare with you in beauty,' continued D'Auterive; 'and if I have ever been false to the love with which you have inspired me, it was because, in the words of

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monseigneur, I was a fool, and did not know in what my heart's pride, my true happiness consisted.'

These eulogiums, these protestations, were evidently intended to retaliate upon the duke somewhat of that keen humiliation which he had inflicted upon the duchess; and it was a singular position for a husband, to hear another, thus, as it were, do homage to his wife. But between these two men, who were thus heaping insults upon each other, stood the woman who was the subject of this strange discussion, and who, after having been wounded in her pride by the gross outrages of the one, now suffered in her heart from the false eulogiums of the other. She felt that they were false; they were generous in their intent, but this intent was too evident.

She raised her head, and elevating herself above the cruel grief which tortured her, she said, proudly:

'It is my turn, gentlemen, it is my turn to tell you my conditions; and although I wield neither sword nor poignard—although I possess neither the public authority which renders the duke so insolent, nor the concealed power which has given you, M. D'Auterive, the strength to undertake my defence—yet I will tell you my conditions, my resolve, and I swear to you, you will accept them—I swear it to you, whether they please you or displease you.'

At this proud address, the Duke de Nevres gazed at his wife darkly, but with a glance which had lost its audacious insolence. Gaston, on his part, watched her with anxiety; for, in his present position, he could scarcely refuse to obey her, and with his knowledge of her character, it was impossible for him to foresee what her decision might be.

'Monseigneur, and you, M. D'Auterive,' resumed the duchess, with true dignity, 'do not occupy yourself with my future lot in so far as it concerns myself alone; it will trouble neither of you. Monseigneur, you fear to see me enter your house again; you are too vain; you dream of impossibilities. Before you uttered the gross insults which you have inflicted upon a woman, who is not too old to remember when you begged for her hand upon your knees, I had resolved that we should never again dwell beneath the same roof. But, monseigneur, I will leave your house—I will not be driven from it. You have condemned me to end my days in a convent; I receive this destiny, without accepting it from you. I will not be hurried thither as a criminal—I will retire thither as a woman to whom the world has grown insupportable.'

'Oh, *mon dieu*, madam!' said the duke with a sneer, 'I will not stick at words, provided things are as I understand them.'

'You understand also, Duke de Nevres, that within a month, you will resign your government.'

'You are losing your senses, madam.'

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'No, my lord, no. Since we have begun to execute upon each other the justice which we merit, each one must have his share. I accept my condemnation, I but disguise it; do you accept yours, and you can disguise it beneath the show of a proud disinterestedness, a lofty renunciation of the grandeurs of state.'

'Excellent!' said the duke, with a smile. 'And now I am curious to know the sentence you will pronounce against this gentle cavalier.'

'Monseigneur, M. D'Auterive did not enter your association voluntarily; it was to save his life that he submitted to the conditions which were imposed upon him.'

'I had forgotten, in truth,' said the duke, 'that M. D'Auterive has found you quite innocent, and it was but fair that you should render him the same justice. Well, your chevalier will do what he pleases, then, I suppose?'

'No, monseigneur; if M. D'Auterive would act as a gentleman, he ought to leave France, for upon this condition alone can he render us our security without danger to himself. Deprived of the documents which now protect him, he would ever find in you an enemy, too powerful, too implacable, too unscrupulous, perhaps, for his safety, and he would tremble hourly for his life. Should he keep these papers, he would possess a power too great, a power that might tempt him to abuse it against those whose honour and life he held in his possession. It is necessary, therefore, that he should resign them. He will do it, I am sure; I expect it, M. D'Auterive.'

Gaston grew serious and thoughtful.

'Monseigneur,' he said at last, 'the proposal of the duchess is honourable for us both. Upon these terms I shall not owe my life to you, and you will not leave yours in my keeping: the thing is simple on both sides. And since the proposition that I should leave France comes to me as advice, as a prayer, and not as a command, I am ready to subscribe to it; but the difficulty lies in executing these conditions.'

The duke appeared to reflect in his turn, and whether it were that he spoke in good faith, or that he concealed a thought of vengeance beneath his assent, he replied:

'The difficulty is not so great as you imagine; you know, doubtless, where these papers are. Let us go together: we will destroy them in the presence of one another, and then each will be free to act as he pleases.'

'You are recurring to your former proposition, monseigneur; your safety first, and then mine and that of the duchess will be at your mercy. No, my lord, it shall not be so: you must confide to my honour as a gentleman; and I swear to you, you shall have no cause to repent of it.'

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'You claim a right which you do not yield to others, sir, replied the duke, 'my word is well worth yours.'

'No, monseigneur, for you have not injured me, and I have no debt of vengeance to demand either of you, or of any one of those whom I know as belonging to us, while you—'

He paused, and then added suddenly:

'Stay, monseigneur, I see we can never settle it in this way; I have two propositions to offer to you. In this house there are cards and dice, and there are also swords; by which game will you decide who shall be master of the other's destiny? The question matters little to our associates, for they are indifferent to me as well as to you. They shall be judge of the game, or of the combat.'

'You are too skilful a gamester for me, chevalier,' said the duke.

'In that case bring the swords.'

'You cannot hold yours, sir.'

'And besides, I would not suffer it!' said the duchess. 'It is for me alone to command in this house. I would gladly have given one of you the opportunity of displaying generosity, but you are so busied with your mutual fears, that it remains for me to say what you must do. M. D'Auterive, you will tell me where these papers are; when I know where to find them I will take it upon myself to insure your departure; and when he is in safety,' she added, turning to her husband, 'I will place your honour beyond the reach of danger.'

The duke knit his brows at the proposition, and D'Auterive made a gesture of disapproval, then both glanced at the duchess as if to satisfy themselves of the honesty of her intentions. The air with which, amid their fears and disquietudes, they gazed upon her, and then at each other, was so ludicrous that D'Auterive burst into a fit of laughter and exclaimed:

'The devil seize me, if we do not look like three robbers, who know not how to separate after sharing their booty. The first who goes is afraid lest the others should assassinate him as soon as he has turned his back.'

'You are right,' said the duke, assuming an air of frankness. 'Let us despatch; and to convince you that I am more disposed to arrange matters than you are, I will accept the duchess's offer upon the conditions that she has proposed for herself, and for you also, sir.'

'And for yourself likewise, monseigneur,' replied D'Auterive, rising.

'It shall be my care to see that he accepts them,' said the duchess.

'On what day,' said the duke, 'will you place in madam's hands the papers in question?'

'That does not depend solely upon me' said D'Auterive.

'How!' cried the duke 'are not the documents in the keep,

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ing of a person who will restore them as soon as you demand them?'

'At all events they are in the keeping of a person who will not place them in the hands of justice,' said D'Auterive, perceiving his error, 'unless he does not see me within two days.'

At this moment a confused noise was heard in the adjoining apartment, and the Comte de Frias entered in haste.

'Monseigneur,' he cried 'while we are wasting our time in endless discussion, the parliament is prosecuting its inquest, deterred neither by the threats which have been used toward some of its members, nor by lack of proofs. M. de Fourvières has been arrested in full session, for having retracted his accusation, and he has basely confessed the artifice which he employed against the chevalier. The dwelling of the latter has been entered, and a most active search is on foot there. That of Barati's, also, has been ransacked from top to bottom, and the councillor's daughter has disappeared.'

'Disappeared!' cried D'Auterive, with an air of terror, which was unobserved except by the duchess. 'A formal accusation must have been entered,' cried the comte, 'what else can account for the pertinacity with which parliament pursues this business?'

'How did you hear this?' said the duke in alarm.

'From Belissane, who, as he told me, stole from the chamber, on seeing the turn which matters were taking. He then went to his house, provided himself with money, mounted his horse, and must now be upon the road to Spain.'

'D——n! D'Auterive, we are lost!' cried the duke. 'Speak! where are these papers? we must have them within the hour, either by craft or by violence.'

The chevalier, equally alarmed with the rest, was about to speak, when a glance from the duchess silenced him.

'Still,' said Frias, 'there has been no mention of names. In a word, matters stand thus, or did, when Belissane left the chamber. Information has been given of the existence of a vast manufactory of counterfeit foreign coin, and not, as it seems, to M. de Fourvieres only, but to several other members of the parliament. Some of the principal personages in the province are accused of being engaged in it, but no one has been named; even the place where it exists was not designated; and it was the heedlessness of M. D'Auterive alone which gave rise to suspicions on this point.'

'*Ma foi*,' exclaimed the duke, '*sauve qui peut*! Belissane is a shrewd knave, he has watched the course of things, and has taken a step which we would do well to imitate—that is, to reach the frontiers as soon as possible.'

These words agitated all present. Several stepped aside,

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and were about to withdraw, when suddenly the woman whom we have named Rosine, entered, saying:

'Silence! I beg you! Two persons have just entered my house, and they might overhear you.'

'How, woman,' cried the duke, 'you left your den open, and we here?'

'Monseigneur,' replied Rosine, with an air far from respectful, 'the den which hides this house, where duchesses meet with chevaliers, and dukes with grisettes, this den is always open until eight in the evening, and it is now but half-past seven. What would the patrol of the suburb say, if it were closed before the usual hour? they would suspect mischief.'

'Who are these persons?' said M. de Frias.

'A soldier of good mien, and as I think of the company of M. D'Auterive, and a young maiden who seems not to know where she is. They have taken up their quarters in the outer hall.'

'But you can send them away,' said the duke.

'Yes, in truth,' said Rosine, 'but not before half an hour, when I put out the light.'

These replies were uttered with an impertinence, which, to those who were acquainted with Rosine's usual demeanour, seemed to indicate that the arrival of these new comers was not a matter of indifference to some who were here assembled. D'Auterive understood the matter thus, for he rose and said:

'If you will permit me, I will engage, with the help of a few louis, to despatch this gallant to entertain his lass in some other inn of the neighbourhood.'

'But is there no other way of leaving this place?' said the duke.

'No other, monseigneur,' said Rosine, 'no other through my dwelling; as to the doors of this house which open upon the street, you would be obliged to force them, for they have not been unlocked these three years.'

'Try again to get rid of them,' said the Comte de Frias.

'I have tried my best,' replied Rosine, in a tone of ill humour, 'but the soldier does not look like a man so very easily managed; he told me that he was resolved to remain in the inn, since there were others here also; and when I told him that he was mistaken, he bade me listen to the sound of your voices, which could be heard quite distinctly, and he added: "Take care lest I call the patrol! for I saw a man enter here just now, who looked more like a thief than a gallant or an honest tippler." He meant the Comte de Frias.'

'See to it then, D'Auterive,' said the duke, forgetting, in his alarm, cautions against the chevalier's escape.

D'Auterive left the apartment, followed by Rosine, who whispered to him in a low voice:

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'Hasten! they are friends.'

The chevalier hurried from the house, crossed the garden, and as he entered the hall, he perceived Pierre Couteau and Clemence Barati.

'Here I am, mademoiselle,' he said to Clemence.

'Ah, sir,' cried the maid, 'help me! I know not what to do, nor what will become of me.'

'What has happened, then, my pretty one?' said D'Auterive.

'Are you ignorant?'

'Perfectly so.'

'Why, my father,' replied Clemence, 'do you know where he is? what they have done with him? what danger threatens him?'

'None,' said D'Auterive, 'none, if you have followed the council that I gave you; none, if you had time to secure the casket which I described to you.'

'I succeeded in doing so, sir; but what does this casket contain?'

'Where is it?' said D'Auterive, with an eagerness so remarkable that it surprised Clemence, in spite of her alarm.

'This casket concerns my father only, I suppose?'

'It contains the safety of a hundred persons of the highest distinction; you must place it in my hands, mademoiselle, and at once.'

Clemence hesitated for an instant, then, extricating her arm from the mantle which enveloped her, she said:

'Here it is, chevalier!'

When D'Aterive held in his hands this precious casket, which rendered him at last the master of his destiny, and that of so many others, his bosom was thrilled by an emotion of joy and terror, almost indescribable; he gazed at it for a while, and although stimulated by no motive of vengeance or of cruelty, yet he was seized with one of those desires which bewilder the brain, the desire of using the power which he held, were it only to see for a moment so many lofty heads bend humbly before him.

Pierre Couteau gazed at him with astonishment, and said, roughly:

'Chevalier, this is no time for reflection; I have other news to announce to you. Your uncle, the baron, de la Roque, must now be in Toulouse; my father, who preceded him by an hour, has been to your house and found it closed by the authority of parliament. He then came to the barracks to inquire of me where he could find you, for it seems that the baron has important tidings for you. I went out in quest of you, promising to bring you with me to the hotel D'Espagne, where the baron was to alight on his arrival. As I passed, your house I found this maiden wandering around

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in search of you, *ma foi*; when she told me she knew not where to go, I brought her here.'

'Alas! yes sir,' said Clemence, 'when I had secured this precious casket, having a presentiment that something was about to happen, I left the house by a secret door, in order to deposit it in a safe place. But afraid to trust it with any of my friends or relatives, I resolved to carry it to you. I found your house occupied by the officers of justice, and not daring to return home, I entered a church, where I remained until evening. At last, forced to leave this asylum, I was on my way to your house again, when I met this man who brought me hither.'

'D'Auterive had listened attentively to Clemence, whose mild beauty, agitated as it was with fear and grief, and whose confiding and simple accent had greatly interested him, and he replied:

'You cannot remain a moment longer here. Go hence with this honest soldier, and wait for me at the corner of the street—or rather, follow me; it is better to fly from this accursed place at once.'

He took a step toward the door, and then paused.

'But the rest?' he thought, 'I cannot leave them in this uncertainty.'

He was about to return to them, but he paused again, muttering to himself:

'Yet it were the act of a madman to enter that chamber again, with the proofs in my hand; they would cut my throat without the slightest hesitation; and the duchess, what would become of her?'

'Chevalier D'Auterive,' cried Couteau, in a tone of alarm; 'it seems to me as if I heard people passing and repassing before this door.'

'*Diable*,' said the chevalier, 'can they be spies?'

'It is possible, yet we are strong enough to escape them; but reflect,' added Pierre Couteau, in a lower tone, 'some one may recognise Mademoiselle Barati, and her presence in this house cannot fail to give rise to unpleasant surmises.'

'You are right, Pierre,' said the chevalier, 'let us leave this place.'

'It is too late!' said a man who now entered, and closed the door quickly behind him.

D'Auterive grasped his poignard, and concealed the casket beneath his mantle; Pierre Couteau drew his sabre, but both paused, as they recognised the Baron de la Roque.

'My uncle!' cried the chevalier.

'Pierre,' said the baron quickly, 'your father, Jean Couteau, is watching at a short distance from this house, to see that no one approach it. Go and join him, he has the password for those who ought to enter.'

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Pierre Couteau left them, and the Baron de la Roque, turning to his nephew, said:

'*Mordieu*! nephew, I did not expect to find you in this place, and in such pleasant company, after what I had heard respecting you. Could you not send this *demoiselle* elsewhere? for we have to discourse of matters more serious than affairs of gallantry.'

'Baron,' said the chevalier, addressing his uncle, 'mademoiselle is the daughter of Barati; a mischance I cannot explain to you led her hither, and we were about to leave when you entered.'

'*Diable*!' said the baron, 'the daughter of Barati! that is another matter; let her remain, let her remain!'

D'Auterive gazed upon the baron with astonishment, and, at the same time, with the most anxious curiosity. He had passed the last few hours amid events so hurried, so extraordinary, that he asked himself if the baron's presence had not some reference to that vast association, the members of which were for the most part unknown to each other. He hesitated to put the question, and watched him as he quietly closed the door and the windows, barricading all with extreme care, and displaying an accurate knowledge of the localities of the house.

'What are you doing, uncle?'

'I am securing us against the visits of inquisitive persons, for we must be alone with those who are about to repair hither; and since mademoiselle is present, there is no objection to her witnessing our interview.'

The chevalier lowered his voice, and said to the baron:

'I have no idea of your meaning, sir; but I feel bound to inform you, that there are a number of people about the premises who may enter here at any moment.'

The baron gazed at D'Auterive, as if to divine his thoughts, and said:

'You are pale, nephew; are you terrified because the parliament has meddled somewhat with our affairs?'

'My dear uncle,' replied D'Auterive, with an air of disdain, 'one of those who are in this house has sent me a thrust here, which, had it not struck a rib, would have slain me outright. Although the wound is not dangerous, yet the pain and loss of blood have made me slightly pale.'

The baron appeared saddened and surprised, but his emotion seemed to refer to something else than the wound which the chevalier had received.

'One of those who are in this house has stabbed you?' he rejoined, 'what secret have you betrayed, then?'

'It concerns you little, uncle; but if you will be guided by me, you will quit this house at once, or, at least, suffer me to

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leave it with mademoiselle, as this is scarcely a proper asylum for her.'

'That was true,' replied the baron, roughly, 'when she was here with such a madcap as you, but my presence is a sufficient warrant for her. Besides, my nephew, if the demoiselle here present is Mademoiselle Barati, as you say, she might have found twenty other more suitable places to which she could have retired, after her father's arrest. She must have been led here, therefore, by motives of which I wish to be informed.'

'M. de la Roque, this maiden is under my protection, and, notwithstanding the respect I owe you, I will not suffer—'

'Gently, gently! my nephew,' said the baron, casting a peculiar glance upon the chevalier, 'do not shout so loud; you are acquainted, perhaps, with the adage of the Arabs: *Speech is silver, but silence is gold.*'

D'Auterive started backward, and returning the baron's glance, he reached him his open hand, and replied:

'Without doubt; but the hour is coming, when the adage may be reversed, when we can say that speech is gold.'

'The hour has come!' cried the baron, warmly, as he struck the palm of his hand in that of his nephew's—'all the members of the association will be here in an hour. We can now strike the decisive blow.'

D'Auterive did not seem to understand him, but the baron continued:

'All that we needed was money. Well, now, my nephew, we have it, in sacks, in barrels, in mountains. The vaults of La Roque are filled with it; we will all start this night for the mountain, and will carry off as much as we can, and with that—'

The baron darted a triumphant glance toward the ceiling, and D'Auterive, who referred his words to the society of counterfeiters, was convinced anew that the baron was a member of the association.

The latter, almost wild with joy, cried suddenly:

'And those above, are they in the business?'

'All,' said the chevalier.

'Do you know them?'

'Monseigneur Duke de Nevres, the Duchess, Monseigneur the Bishop de St. Croix—'

'It is impossible!' cried the baron—'the duke, the Bishop de St. Croix—'

'Why, it is true, they are of higher rank than we, but we are of the old noblesse as well as they, and they might very well belong to the association of which we are members.'

'We are talking Greek, nephew; they have not the same interest that we have; the Duke de Nevres, and above all, the

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Bishop de St. Croix would burn us alive if they suspected the truth.'

'What do you say, uncle? burn us alive? If such a punishment were reserved for such a crime, they would be the first to mount the pile.'

'No, no, far from it; they are men who know how to take their precautions. If the affair succeeds, they will reap the lion's share; and if it fails, we shall have to pay for the broken dishes.'

'There is no fear of that, uncle; I hold in my hands the proofs of their participation of the crime, and now that the affair is discovered, they must save us or perish with us.'

'What is that? the affair discovered! Why, what evidence have you of that?'

'*Pardieu*! Why, Barati's arrest.'

'That is no proof.'

'I know it; but they suspect him.'

'I comprehend; his conduct in parliament at the time of the revocation of the edict of Nantes.'

'Why, we are talking Hebrew, now, uncle. What the devil has the revocation of the edict of Nantes to do with all this?'

The baron gazed at his nephew with stupefaction and distrust, and said:

'Among the men who are above, are there none of the reformed faith?'

'*Ma foi*, uncle,' replied D'Auterive, 'I think that religion has nothing to do with this affair; so far as I know, they are all good catholics.'

'In that case, nephew, we are talking neither Greek nor Hebrew; we do not understand each other at all.'

'I am afraid so, uncle,' said D'Auterive.

'But then, why are you here?'

'Will you permit me, uncle, to inquire first the cause of your presence?'

'Do you take me for a traitor, chevalier?'

'I was about to ask you the same question.'

At this moment Rosine appeared at the door, and said:

'Chevalier, they are growing impatient above; you must resolve upon something. Go hence, it is the most prudent course, for the duke maintains that it is safest to despatch you upon the spot, happen what may.'

'You are right, my child,' said the chevalier; 'but re-assure the duchess, tell her that I possess the papers in question, and that she need not be uneasy about the duke's anger.'

'By all the saints!' cried the duke, who had followed Rosine, and who now rushed into the chamber, sword in hand, 'you shall not quit us thus, M. D'Auterive!'

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'By all the devils!' said the Bishop de St. Croix, advancing in his turn, 'we must have the papers.'

The chevalier, finding himself no longer unsupported, and sure of being able to summon Jean and Pierre Couteau to his assistance, thought it the best course for himself and his accomplices, to destroy all traces of their association, by placing the casket in the hands of the duke.

'Here is that,' he said to him, 'which will save you, and which ought to save us all—all, do you understand me, monseigneur; and, forget not, that if a single person is forgotten in the general pardon, should it cost me my life, I will have vengeance.'

'All that has been arranged by a better mediator than yourself,' said the duke. 'M. de St. Croix is one to whom I can listen. He has my promise.'

The bishop gave a sign of assent.

'Despatch, brother!' he said, at the same time, 'let us destroy these papers.'

'Rosine,' said the duke 'bring a brazier, and inform the persons who are above that we hold our safety in our hands, and that they are entitled to be present at the ceremony.'

In the meanwhile, the baron had approached the chevalier, and had said to him in a low voice:

'By my soul, I could never have believed that the duke was concerned in the business.'

'He, and many others, uncle.'

'M. de la Roque also!' cried the duke, with a joyous air, 'why, all the province is engaged in the affair; *ma foi*, baron, I had imagined they had dispensed with you, and had taken possession of your castle without your suspecting it.'

The baron assumed an air of suspicion, and his nephew, who, notwithstanding the gay bearing of the duke, fearing some error and some mischance, said to him in an under tone:

'Be silent!'

'But mordieu!' cried the duke, 'who is that young girl concealed in the corner yonder?'

'Monseigneur,' said D'Auterive quickly, 'it is to her that we all owe our safety—it was she who removed the paper from her father's house.'

'Mademoiselle Barati!' exclaimed the duke.

'Mademoiselle Barati; she came here to place these papers in my hands.'

The duke's brow lowered.

'Chevalier, she knows more than she should, methinks.'

'Her father's life is in our hands,' said the baron, 'and I will answer for her silence.'

'True, true; but here is the duchess, my brother, M. de Frias, and—'

'M. de Frias living!' cried the baron, starting backwards,

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'The Baron de la Roque here!' exclaimed M. de Frias.

These exclamations were at first drowned by the voice of the duke, who continued to announce the persons as they entered, but probably an explanation would have followed immediately, when a knock at the outer door threw the assembly into a state of anxious suspense.

The Baron de la Roque alone spoke:

'It is Jean Couteau,' he said, 'it is a friend and brother.'

He stepped to the door, and Jean Couteau thrust in his head, and speaking in a low voice, said:

'There is a group of seven or eight persons without, who demand to be admitted; they have repeated the pass-word: "*Speech is silver, but silence is gold.*"'

'It is the rest of the band,' said the duke; 'let them enter. I confess I am anxious to see all our comrades, and, above all, to know the one who has so cunningly knotted this association that he alone was master of us all.'

The Baron de la Roque, who stood at the door, admitted five or six men, one after another. The first who entered, on perceiving the duke, exclaimed:

'Treason!' and he placed his hand upon his sword.

'Ha!' cried the duke, laughing, 'M. de Lancy! *Pardieu!* for a man of the religion which attacks the morality of our holy faith, you seem to have made a good bargain of your principles.'

Others now entered: the duke called them all by name, jesting pleasantly with each one, while they gathered around M. de la Roque, and said to him in a low voice:

'Are you sure you have not led us into a snare?'

'At all events,' replied the baron, 'we are armed, and as numerous as they are, and we shall see if they will take us as easily as they think. Besides, he holds the deed of our association, and it is much better that D'Auterive should have given it to him here, than in his palace.'

'Silence, gentlemen!" cried the duke, 'do not let us keep up the farce among ourselves, I beg you: what is done, is done. And since the affair is discovered, it is better to finish matters, and protect ourselves against treachery, by destroying these "papers."'

While the duke spoke, he placed the casket upon the table, and exclaimed:

'*Par l'enfer*! this casket has been opened, the seal is broken!'

'What matters it!' said the Bishop de St. Croix, 'if the lock is uninjured, and the papers are found in it. It is an accident.'

The duke, with the aid of his poignard, forced the lock, and beheld a book, each leaf of which was folded and sealed. He held it up, and showing it to all present, said:

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'Here it is, gentlemen! do you recognise it?'

The book was enclosed in a covering, upon which were drawn various hieroglyphics. All present crowded around it, and the new comers as well as the rest, declared that it was in a similar book that they had inscribed their signatures.

The duke still held it in his hands, and slightly opening the first leaf, he said:

'You know, gentlemen, that in case of a dissolution of the society, whether by the general will, or on account of outward constraint, the deed itself regulates the division of the sums which belong to the society.'

The Baron de la Roque and his friends gazed at each other with an air of wonder as they heard these words. A sudden thought seemed to strike the baron, and he muttered in a low voice:

'They are the men!'

The duke now cast his eyes upon the page which contained, as he said, these regulations. Scarcely had he read a line, when he exclaimed in a voice of thunder:

'What is this? a deed of association to profit by the death of the king, and the disposition of the regent to re-establish the reformed religion! A plot against the state, gentlemen! a crime!'

At these words, M. de la Roque and those of his party grouped themselves in a corner, while the baron, who, from his conversation with D'Auterive, suspected that the duke was entangled in some serious affair, and who, from his words concerning the division to be made, had in part divined its nature, exclaimed:

'What did you think to find in this casket, then, monseigneur? Ah! it was the deed of an association of—'

'Silence, for heaven's sake!' said D'Auterive, who was now convinced that the baron, having discovered what was passing in the vast vaults beneath the castle, had resolved to apply the wealth of the counterfeiters to the accomplishment of the plot of the Protestants.

'Lay down your arms!' cried the duke, 'lay down your arms! You are my prisoners!'

'Not yet,' they responded, unsheathing their swords.

'M. D'Auterive,' said the Duke, drawing his weapon, 'I demand your aid; I will look upon each one as a rebel who refuses to assist me in securing these traitors!'

In the warmth of his zeal and hatred against the protestants, and his eagerness to chastise them, the duke forgot his own safety, and a sanguinary struggle was about to commence, when suddenly the door was thrown open with violence, and Jean Couteau, pale, agitated, and trembling, rushed into the chamber, and pointing toward the door, said, in a broken stifled voice:

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'There he comes! here he is!'

'Who?' cried all present, apparently with equal terror.

'He! the dead man! the sorcerer Pastourel!'

At the same moment, the shepherd, with whom our readers are acquainted under the name of Pastourel, made his appearance. He was clothed in a brown riding hood, and he bore his iron pointed staff, upon which he leaned; he then cast a mild glance upon all present.

The duke started with terror, as he beheld the pale face of the shepherd, and some exclamation would doubtless have betrayed the secret of his alarm, when Pastourel made a sign which imposed silence upon him. Then in a calm, but authoritative voice, he said:

'Return your swords to their scabbards, gentlemen! Rosina, bring hither the brazier. Monseigneur cast into it the papers which you hold.'

The duke hesitated. Pastourel drew from beneath his mantle, a casket resembling that which had been placed in the hands of the Duke, and took from it a book, the envelope of which was exactly similar to the former. At this sight the duke obeyed, and Pastourel imitating him, cast also into the brazier the register which he had brought.

'Gentlemen,' he said, while the deeds were burning, 'there is no longer any crime, either on the one side or on the other. Monseigneur, you have heard nothing; Baron de la Roque you have divined nothing.'

'Be it so!' said the duke.

'Willingly!' said the baron.

'Gentlemen,' resumed Pastourel, addressing the others, 'retire with the most perfect confidence as to the results of this affair; every trace is effaced.'

'Are you certain?' said the duke respectfully.

'I assure you of it.'

'How the devil,' cried the baron, 'would you have me trust to the word of a keeper of sheep?'

'Comte de Frias,' said Pastourel, 'tell this man that he may trust me.'

'I think he will do so,' said the comte, 'when I conjure him by that hospitality which he offered me so strangely fifteen years ago.'

'You are right,' said the baron, casting his eyes to the ground. 'But, *pardieu*, should it cost me my head, I will know the mystery of that vision, which I beheld the night before last in my castle.'

'Do not wish to know it,' said Pastourel.

'I have said that I would venture my head! Besides, if the matter is not explained, I should never dare to enter my dwelling again.'

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'You will never enter it again; the castle of la Roque is burned to the ground.'

'My castle burned!' cried the baron, 'who has done the deed? who has despoiled me of my sole remaining wealth.'

'Who could thus destroy the vast riches which were still buried in its vaults?' exclaimed the duke.

'I!' said Pastourel, 'and when you hear the reason, you will both thank me. The parliament can send thither now, if it will; it will find there neither the arms and munitions which you have collected there, gentlemen of the reformed faith, nor the machines with which you used to coin false money gentlemen of the *noblesse*. Leave me, sirs, with the duke and M. de la Roque; we have some matters yet to arrange together.'

Then turning to each one in particular; he said, first to D'Auterive.

M. D'Auterive, you can escort Mademoiselle Barati to her father's house; he will soon be set at liberty, for there is no one to support an accusation against him. Monseigneur de St. Croix, it is necessary that you should be to-morrow in your palace which you have not left. Comte de Frias, your son is waiting to embark with you.'

'Don Jose!' cried the baron, 'no, no! we have a bloody account to settle.'

'M. D'Autervie,' resumed Pastourel, casting a threatening glance upon the baron, 'the duty which I impose upon you once fulfilled, I counsel you to profit by the permission which the Duke de Nevres grants you, to travel in foreign lands.'

Then approaching the duchess, he said:

'Madam, you are expected at your palace; you will there give orders for a grand festival, which will take place to-morrow.'

The duchess, who had not taken her eyes from Pastourel since he had entered, said to him submissively, and in a low voice:

'Be it so, sir! be it so! but afterwards?'

'Do that which God inspires you to do!' replied Pastourel.

All present having left the house after having thus received a command, or word of counsel from the mouth of Pastourel, he remained alone with the Baron de la Roque and the Duke de Nevres. Their interview lasted until morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

We will avail ourselves once more of the privilege of the novelist, to overleap time as we have overleaped space, and will return to the old castle of La Roque, or rather to its ruins. Sixteen years had elapsed since the day when the two associations of which we have spoken, had been so sud-

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denly dissolved, and the memory of this circumstance was entirely forgotten. The noise of the accusation entered by M. de Fourvieres, had, in truth, been spread abroad among the people, but the result of the search set on foot by parliament, in the dwellings of Barati and of D'Auterive had caused this accusation to be considered as an illusion emanating from the president's brain, and the secret information lodged against them, as the trick of some malicious intermeddler. The burning of the castle of La Roque, occurring, as it did, immediately upon this accusation, had at first appeared as a proof of the reality of the supposed crime; but when it was known that the castle had been surprised, sacked and burned by the shepherds of the mountain, the deed was viewed as an act of vengeance against the persecutions which the baron had inflicted upon the clothiers of Lavalanet; and whether some higher authority, or some secret influence had checked the ardour of the parliament in investigating this affair, the inquest was followed by no results; besides this, it was for the interest of too many individuals that the business should be forgotten. Vague accusations had been current, insinuations had been aimed at persons of even higher authority than the Duke de Nevres, and were whispered in some circles of the parliament: hints of sorcery of apparitions were mingled with these rumours, until after the lapse of a few years, naught remained but a remembrance so indistinct, that no one could tell what in reality had occurred.

The greater part of the principal actors in the scene, had, one by one, disappeared. Thus, nothing had since been heard of the Comte de Frias, or of his son, Don Jose.

The Duke de Nevres, after having resigned his government, had returned to Paris. But as there were at that time no gazettes to announce the receptions given daily by the king or by the regent, it was not till long afterward, that it was known that the duchess had not reappeared.

On the other side, Barati, after having resumed his seat in the parliament, had by degrees sold all the property that he possessed; at the end of a year he had resigned his place as councillor, and had left Toulouse with his daughter Clemence. It was known also, that he had returned to Paris, but he had so well concealed himself, that nothing had since been heard of him.

It was known likewise in the country, that D'Auterive had inherited some estates, with the title of comte, which had been bequeathed to him by a great uncle on his mother's side; that he was attached to the royal household, and had married, but no one could tell the name of the woman who was his wife.

The only person who had not left the country, was the Baron de la Roque.—Still he had not returned to La Loque, as he

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had at first intended; neither had he rebuilt his castle on the the spot where the former one had stood. His new abode was situated about half a league from the old one, and in a spot much less wild and romantic. It was still indeed the mansion of a seigneur, with his seignorial rights displayed and verified in stone; at each angle of the vast structure stood a turret, but one of these turrets enclosed a private stairway, the three others served as store-houses for fruit and grain. Wide ditches had been dug along the main front of the modern castle, but they were bordered with fruit trees and planted with vegetables.

The Baron de la Roque was blind. His daughter Charlotte tended him with a devotion, which the singular humour of the old man did not altogether appreciate.

As to Charlotte's mother, the Baroness de la Roque, she had also disappeared, although the place of her retreat was known.

Galidou, accused of having been the first instigator of the burning of the castle, had withdrawn into Spain, and his father never appeared to concern himself about his fate.

Old Gali was dead, and his daughter Catharine, having inherited all his property, had espoused Pierre Couteau, whose military air had fascinated her.

As for old Jean Couteau, he lived with his son, whose flocks he drove to pasture upon the mountain, for Pierre still carried on the commerce in wool and cloths established by his father-in-law.

But never, not for any price, could Jean Couteau be induced to drive his flocks to the pasturage where he had seen Pastourel lying wounded upon the earth; and when any necessary errand led him in sight of the ruins of the old castle, he passed them trembling and defending himself againt all evil influences by making the sign of the cross, and uttering the most fervent prayers.

We will be more courageous than Jean Couteau, and will accompany to these ruins, a cavalier of from twenty-eight to thirty years, who repaired thither without being in the slightest degree intimidated by the bad repute of the spot.

The day was beginning to dawn, and the sun was already upon the edge of the horizon, when our young man, after having fastened the bridle of his horse to the branch of a tree, crossed the tottering remnants of the drawbridge, and boldly entered the court. He reached a low gate, ascended a few steps, and found himself in a vaulted hall, which had been spared by the conflagration.

A man who had reached the verge of extreme old age, was here seated upon a tolerably comfortable bed. Books, mathematical instruments, a furnace and alembics, adorned this apartment.

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When the youth entered, the old man saluted him with a gesture of his hand, and continued to read in a folio which he held upon his knees.

The youth, familiar, doubtless, with the habits of the old man, signed to him not to disturb himself, and commenced playing with a large mountain dog, which was lying in one corner of the hall. The dog approached to fawn upon him, and the young man, taking the animal's head in his hands, and reaching him a handkerchief, said, as if the dog could understand him:

'Smell it well, smell this handkerchief, Greyfoot, smell it well, and if ever a being that exhales this sweet and perfumed odour, visits these ruins, do not bite her, do you hear?'

The dog, as if he had comprehended him, smelt the handkerchief, took it in his mouth, and having tossed it into the air and caught it again, he brought it to the young man. The latter took it from his jaws, and added:

''Tis well, Greyfoot, 'tis well! for you are large enough to frighten one more fearless than a young girl. Smell it, smell it!'

The dog smelt the handkerchief once more, wagged his tail, and then approached the old man, who had closed his book. The Solitary had crossed himself after he had finished reading, a proof that, notwithstanding his strange abode, and the singular instruments with which it was furnished, he meddled with no cabalistic and damnable arts; he turned toward the young man, and said with a mild and firm voice:

'Well, Bernard! what news!'

'All is going worse and worse, master Pastourel! worse and worse! The Comte D'Auterive arrived last night, and instead of stopping to lodge at his uncle, Baron de La Roque's, he has ridden on to the manor of Sain-Quintin, which was purchased lately by that adventurer, who calls himself the Marquis of Veroni, a title that I thought extinct with the last prince of Puzzano, who, as you know, was burned forty years go upon the Chiaia at Naples, for the crime of sorcery.'

'What reason have you, Bernard,' replied the old man, with emotion, 'for doubting the rights of this stranger to bear the title of Marquis of Veroni?'

'In the first place, on account of what I have just told you, master Pastourel, and then the fellow murders the Italian like a Swiss pedlar, chatters French like a Toulousian, and speaks the dialect of this province admirably.'

'If you judged wisely, Bernard,' replied Pastourel, 'you would see in all this, so many proofs that he has a right to the title, for if he is in any way the true descendant of the prince of Puzzano, he has been abandoned to neglect and exile, and his education cannot have been as carefully at-

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tended to as yours, Marquis de Velay: but it concerns you little to know what he is.'

'On the contrary, *pardieu*! it concerns me much! In the first place, because he visits the baron's far too often, and then because, in spite of his forty years, well told, although he pretends to be but thirty-six, he pays his court to Charlotte in a manner that does not please me at all.'

'Are you jealous to this degree?'

'Jealous of every body, master Pastourel, even of that other adventurer, who calls himself Vasconcellos, and who, notwithstanding his gallows face, is for ever hovering about the outskirts of the baron's manor.'

'Has he been admitted there?' said the old man with some disquietude.

'He tried it once, and announced himself to the old baron as a neighbour, who wished to make his acquaintance. I cannot tell you the effect that the voice of this Vascancellos produced upon the old man, but it seemed as if the baron strove to pierce the darkness which surrounded him, and he so overwhelmed the said Portuguese with questions, that the latter, after answering at random, withdrew, and since that he has never visited the castle, except the hour when the baron takes his afternoon's siesta, from which the explosion of a thousand guns about his ears would not arouse him.'

'So, then!' said Pastourel.

'Every day at two o'clock, the baron is drunk as a beast, and snores like an organ pipe; now, Vasconcellos, in choosing this hour, seems to me, to sin against all the rules of good breeding, and I would have quarrelled with Charlotte about it more than twenty times, if at the first she had not said to me, 'it *must* be so!'

'She is right' said Pastourel, 'and you do well to believe her.'

'The devil take me if I do believe her!' replied the young Marquis de Velay, rising; 'I think it must *not* be so; but when Charlotte, with that sweet smile, which pierces the very depths of my heart, or with that imperious glance, which thrills me through and through, says "it must!" I obey—I obey, like a simpleton, and still that must have an end, and it will soon be my turn to say, "it must!" and if she does not obey me as I have obeyed her, why, she is deceiving me, she does not love me.'

'And what is this command which Charlotte must obey, if she would prove that she love you?'

Young Bernard shrugged his shoulders, and replied:

'A command to Charlotte! it would be enough to banish me for ever; it will be a prayer, Pastourel, and a prayer as humble as a man can offer.'

'And what will this prayer require of her, Bernard?'

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'To follow me to Spain, if, as I anticipate, the Comte D'Auterive does not bring my father's consent to our marriage.'

'And why do you suppose that this consent will be refused?'

'For an excellent reason; because it has been once refused already.'

'True, but at the second request which you addressed to him, did not your father, the Duke de Nevres, answer, that he would send the Comte D'Aterive, with full powers, to settle this affair? What do you find alarming in this?'

'In the first place, I do not understand this choice which he has made of the Comte D'Aterive; he is a perfect stranger to my family; in the next, because he comes here with his wife.'

'What matters that?'

'She leads him by the nose.'

'And what matters that?'

'What matters that? Why, it is necessary that this marriage should please the comtesse, and I fear that it will not.'

'And wherefore, Bernard?'

'*Pardieu!* the boors of this district are great fools to take you for a sorcerer, if you cannot guess wherefore this marriage will not please the comtesse.'

A gleam of joy passed across the withered face of the old man; and he said:

'Pah! the Comtesse D'Auterive!'

'She is, with her thirty years, the most enticing hair-brained, capricious, petulant woman imaginable.'

A hollow, smothered laugh escaped from Pastourel's lips, and he muttered: 'oh, it is heaven's vengeance!' but the next moment, he appeared to repent him of this ebullition, and he added, in a meek and serious tone:

'Her own safety will induce her not to evince too much obstinacy, or the comte might suspect the motive of her opposition!'

'Oh, you have no idea of Clemence,' said Bernard. 'One would think her a duchess, who had espoused a boor, and governed him at her will. One would never have expected to see D'Auterive tremble thus before his wife, especially when it is he who has married beneath his rank, in choosing the daughter of that pedant Barati, who heaps up farthings upon crowns, and pence upon livres, in a garret, in the Rue de la Huchette, at Paris.'

'He has become a complete miser, as the baron has become a complete drunkard,' muttered Pastourel. 'Vice is like the poison of Brabantio; when it attacks a man, it eats into the very marrow of his bones.'

'Do not talk of poison, Pastourel, for I fear that all your

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skill as a sorcerer, consists in the art of compounding poisons.'

If the light which penetrated this vaulted hall, had been more vivid, the young Marquis de Velay would have observed that Pastourel turned pale, but the youth spoke like a heedless man who gives utterance to a thoughtless word, rather than a real suspicion, and Pastourel replied:

'So, then, you fear the influence of the Comtesse D'Auterive?'

'Why, I am convinced that it is she, who has prevented her husband from alighting at the baron's, as was most natural and proper.'

'I do not see,' replied Pastourel, 'why she should manifest any eagerness to lodge in the dwelling of a rival.'

'But why,' said Bernard, 'has she chosen the dwelling of this Marquis of Veroni, who is in no wise entitled to her esteem?'

'Who knows?' said Pastourel.

'*Pardieu*! cried the marquis, 'I should be delighted to hear that they really fancied one another, that the vapouring airs of the marquis had fascinated the countess.'

'It is scarcely probable as to the past, for I think that they have never met before.'

'How do you know that?'

'Let it suffice that I know it. And have you any thing else to tell me?'

'One thing, and a very strange one; in truth. Charlotte intends paying you a visit. I was not so much surprised at that, for every woman is curious to see a sorcerer; but what astonishes me is this, she intends to come hither alone, and she has plainly told me, that if I attempted to follow her, all our intercourse is at an end, and she will never see me again in her life.'

'Are you jealous of me, as well as of Veroni and Vasconcellos?'

'*Mio Padre*,' said the marquis in a singular tone, '*mio carissimo padre*, I know too well what trade you ply; why, you are the general confidant of all the inhabitants of this district, and there is not a soul of them, but comes to consult you, when he is at a loss how to extricate himself from some embarrassing affair. I have seen Veroni and Vasconcellos come here, and that has not surprised me, for I imagine that they are both troubled by some past action, which neither the one nor the other has ever entrusted to mortal ear, but I am surprised and terrified at the thought that Charlotte should have need of any counsel from you. The devil fly away with me, if it is for any honest matter, for I myself have given her the only good advice that a young girl can listen to—if my father consents, we will—if he refuses, we will elope—that is all plain and proper.'

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'In your first counsel,' replied Pastourel, 'there is one thing that you have entirely forgotten, that is, that if your father consents, it is necessary that the baron should consent likewise.'

'Hem!' said the Marquis de Velay, 'it seems to me, that it is too great an honour for the drunkard, and that he will kiss my hand, when I tell him his daughter will one day be the Duchess de Nevres.'

'Sir Marquis de Velay, future Duke de Nevres,' replied Pastourel, 'you are too presumptuous; the baron will refuse.'

'In that case, I will carry her off.'

'Charlotte will refuse, notwithstanding the propriety of the counsel which you have given her.'

'Ha! every thing conspires, then, against my happiness!'

'Every thing, and you more than all.'

'I!'

'By conducting yourself like the loftiest seigneur that it has ever been my chance to meet with; by imagining that you do too much honour to the daughter of the Baron de la Roque, in demanding her hand, and by treating this Vasconcellos and this Veroni, who are most certainly your equals, as adventurers; by your suspicion of Charlotte, who is a model of virtue, and by speaking with such levity to a man whom you ought to respect.'

'*Pardieu*, for the few bags of gold which you have lent me, old sorcerer, you are growing impertinent,' said the marquis, cutting the air with his riding whip which he held in his hand.

'*Par l'enfer*,' cried the old man, rising from his bed, and displaying his lofty stature; 'were it not for some blood which flows in thy veins, that word would have cost thee thy life.'

The young man dropped his eyes before the piercing glance of Pastourel, and said in a humble tone:

'I was wrong; well then—yes I was wrong; but I have not told you all.'

'What? is there more?'

'Yesterday, on arriving at the castle of La Roque, I inquired after Charlotte; they told me she was in the garden with Vasconcellos. That put me out of humour. Well, at the corner of an alley, I heard persons talking together, behind a row of trees, and I recognised the voices of Charlotte and Vasconcellos. The opportunity was a good one—I approached to listen, and may the devil confound me, if I did not hear the sound of a kiss.'

'It is possible,' said Pastourel.

'Possible?' cried the marquis. 'She is guilty then, and it was so: I was not deceived?'

'Did you not hear it?'

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'I imagined I heard it, but if I had been sure, I would have passed my sword through Vasconcellos' body. But the wind stirred the trees, and I thought I might be mistaken. I approached still nearer; they heard me, and when Charlotte turned her face towards me, her features were so calm, her glance so confident, that I was ashamed of my suspicion. But may the devil strangle me if it did not sound like a kiss, only there was no blushing, no confusion, no emotion, but this accursed sound has been ringing in my ears ever since. I must finish with this Vasconcellos.'

'I have forbidden you to speak to him; a single rash act, and your happiness is destroyed!

'Ever the same threat!' said the marquis. 'I have been led long enough—yes, long enough by your counsels; I will act in my own way—I have need of you no longer.'

'Why have you come hither then,' said Pastourel.

'Well, *mon Dieu*! I have come to tell you that Charlotte will pay you a visit to-night.'

'You did her errand, notwithstanding your suspicions?'

'What, in the devil's name, would you have me to do?' replied Bernard, 'she begged me to come.'

'And you obeyed?

Bernard assumed a melancholy air.

'Stay, old sorcerer!' he said, 'you are mocking me, and justly; but what would you? I love her! Why? how? I cannot say. She told me to come, and I have come. On the way hither I said that I was a fool, but I have come notwithstanding, and when you have told me the hour at which you will expect her, I shall return and bear back your answer, more obedient than your dog Greyfoot. So then, let us hear despatch! tell me at what hour she can see you.'

'I cannot tell you yet,' replied Pastourel, 'that will depend upon the hour at which Comte D'Auterive will visit me to-day.'

'The comte is coming here?' cried Bernard in astonishment.

'Did he not arrive last evening?' said Pastourel, gravely.

'And the comtesse,' said the marquis, affecting a sneer, perhaps she will come also.'

It will be necessary for her to decide to do so,' replied the old man in the same tone.

Bernard stood speechless for a moment; Pastourel's assurance confounded him. If the old man's words should actually prove true, he might place some confidence in him, he thought; although far from being inclined to believe in sorcery, yet he said to himself, 'if I see the comte come first to these ruins, and then the comtesse, I will sell my soul to the old fellow, were he the devil in person, to obtain possession of Charlotte.'

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The young lover had not finished his reflections on this subject, when Greyfoot began to whine and bark joyfully, wagging his tail, and at the same time a female of about thirty-five years, tall and slender, with a well turned foot and ancle, a figure still elegant, and clothed in the costume of a peasant girl of the richer class, entered in haste, and threw herself breathless upon the arm-chair, which a moment before had been occupied by the Marquis de Velay.

'Well, Catherine Couteau,' said Pastourel, what news? I expected to see your husband.'

'Ah, in truth,' said Catherine in a shrill voice, 'he has not the courage for that. I do not know what my good father-in-law has put into his head, but Pierre has grown as timid as a lamb; he still goes up the mountain,' she added, turning proudly to Bernard, who had begun to laugh, 'and if he meets a wolf there, or a bear, or a man, even if this man wears a sword at his side, he will not wink; but speak to him of approaching these ruins, and he trembles and turns as pale as a sheet. Old Jean maintains that you are a spectre and a sorcerer, and Pierre believes his father as he believes the Gospel. But I, who believe neither the old man nor my husband, I have come to tell you the news, although they have both forbidden me to do it.'

'Pierre likewise?' said Pastourel.

'Well, yes, before his father's face, for he is terribly afraid of him, as if he were young enough for the whip; but no sooner had the old man turned his back, than he told me to go as far as the torrent, to see if our woodcutters were at their work; he brought me my mantle after he had wrapped a rosary in it, and he knew well enough, the good man, that I would not stop at the torrent.'

'He knows you, Catherine.'

'And I know him,' replied the latter, 'he will not ask me where I went, but he will burn to know it, and I will not say a word of the matter.'

'You will tell him, my child,' said Pastourel, smiling. 'A woman should not have any secrets from her husband.'

'Bah! bah!' replied Catherine, with a singular air, 'if Pierre is inquisitive, I am not talkative.'

Bernard laughed again, and said: 'Poor Pierre!'

'Ah, ha! sir marquis,' cried Catherine, 'marry Mademoiselle de la Roque, and after fifteen years of wedlock, you will have your little secrets, forsooth; unless you do like others that we know, who have not waited so long as that.'

Bernard blushed at these words, and exclaimed:

'What means this impertinent—'

'Silence!' said Pastourel, 'Catherine is right perhaps, but that is not the question now; I wish to hear the news she

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brings me, and it must be very important, for she is quite out of breath.'

'It is not the news that puts me out of breath, for it is not so very pressing; but then,' she added, lowering her voice, 'I met something strange.'

'Have you met a magpie or a monk? said Bernard.

'Neither magpie, nor monk, nor marquis,' replied Catharine. 'What I met was a man dressed all in black, with a yellow face, hollow, flaming eyes, like a light in a lantern, and long withered hands; a true phantom of parchment, dressed in serge; he stopped me at the border of the torrent, and said in a hollow voice:

'"These are the ruins of the castle of La Roque, are they not?"

'I was so frightened that I answered him with a curtesey.

'Then he added:

'"Is there not a man there called Pastourel?"

'"Oh, yes," I said.

'"Well then," he answered, "tell him that I will visit him to-night."'

At this news Pastourel seemed so astonished, that Bernard, who watched his features, saw at once that the sorcerer's science was completely at fault. Pastourel observed it, and wishing to restore Bernard to the state of uncertainty in which he had left him a moment since, as to the extent of his power, he replied:

'He has arrived sooner than I thought.'

He then examined a sphere, and added:

'I have neglected this inclination by the thousandth part of a degree. I was wrong by a day.'

Catharine clasped her rosary in her hands; but Bernard, equally astonished with the peasant woman, exclaimed:

'And who is this man whom you expect? You must know him.'

'He wishes to remain unknown.'

Bernard was about to reply, but Catharine at once exclaimed:

'It is true, for I asked him his name,' and he said, "I will disclose it to Pastourel." The man frightened me, and not wishing to leave you alone with him, I proposed that he should accompany me, but he replied: "We must see each each other alone, and at night. I will come at eight this evening." "At eight in the ruins?" I cried, "Let him expect me; it must be so; tell him that *speech is silver, but silence is gold.*"'

'Let him come!' muttered Pastourel, casting an involuntary glance upon his dog, and then a long oriental poignard which hung near the head of his bed, 'let him come! But the rest?'

'I will tell you. This morning the Comte D'Auterive sent

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one of his lacqueys to tell my husband that he wished to see him at—'

'The Marquis of Veroni's,' said Pastourel, quickly, as if he feared that another name might be applied to the person of whom Catharine spoke.

'Yes, yes,' she answered, glancing at Bernard, 'at the Marquis of Veroni's. Pierre, who was formerly a soldier in M. D'Auterive's company, went thither without delay, and when he returned, he told me that the comte had directed him to come and inform you that he would visit you about eight o'clock this evening.'

'It is well!' said Pastourel.

'But what is most singular, just as he was leaving the castle of—of the Marquis of Veroni's, the Comtesse d'Auterive stopped him in the hall, and commanded him to announce to you that she would come here at eight o'clock.'

Pastourel glanced with an air of triumph at the Marquis de Velay, and the latter was scarcely able to conceal the emotion of surprise mingled with fear which stirred in his bosom.

'Let them come! let them come!' said Pastourel. 'Marquis, you may tell her who sent you, that she can visit me in the day time.'

'I will tell her so,' replied Bernard, subdued by this strange concurrence of circumstances. Then, as if ashamed of his submission, he added, in a threatening tone:

'But if you were Satan in person, if aught opposes my happiness, forget not that I shall look for an account from you alone.'

'Hence! madman!' said Pastourel. 'There is no obstacle to your happiness but yourself. Hence! for a second menace would cost thee too dear, and I would long since have abandoned thee to the savage brutality of thy character, and to the misfortunes which it will draw upon thy head, if I had not promised to protect thee.'

Bernard hesitated to obey; but as he yielded in his own despite to the love which he felt for Charlotte, so he bent before the superstitious fear with which Pastourel had inspired him; he left the hall, muttering:

'*Par l'enfer:* I will know how matters stand.'

He at once quitted the ruins, mounted his horse, and rode at a gallop towards the castle of La Roque.

We will not follow him towards this mansion; we will remain with Catharine and Pastourel.

Scarcely were they alone, when the tone of the conversation at once changed, and Catherine assumed a more friendly air, as she replied to the questions which the old man addressed to her:

'And the *fellow?*

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'Do not speak of him,' answered Catharine, 'he is mad; he is positively resolved to espouse Mademoiselle de la Roque.'

'Have you told him that which I charged you to say to him?'

'Certainly; but he thinks himself a marquis out and out, and he says that his birth is such as might entitle him to marry some one better than the daughter of a baron, if it so pleased him.'

'Ah!' muttered Pastourel, 'I have been too hasty. I should have known that vanity is the mainspring of his character.'

'And a dreadful vanity,' said Catherine. 'It is true he was handsome some fifteen years ago, and if I had not thought he was my brother, I might have found him to my liking, but he is forty years well told, if he were as old as you said when you brought him to my father's; he was forty years old then, and that is not the age when one should think of a young girl of twenty.'

'Catherine,' resumed Pastourel, 'that is not the danger; if Charlotte loved him, and were willing to be his wife, the obstinate fellow might take the fate it pleases God to send him.'

'Ah, ah!' said Catherine, 'I know well enough what fate it would please his wife to send him, after a year of wedlock.

'You have made a marquis of him by some means or other, and he has more money than many a real marquis, but as to making him a marquis out and out, no, no, father Pastourel; he does not understand it, he is plain Galidou.'

'And if he will not listen to reason, he shall again become so.'

'That is what you told me to say to him, and I did so, but—*basta*! "Catherine," he replied, "I will keep my rank. I said once upon a time, that I would burn and destroy the castle of La Roque, and I did so; I tell you now that I will marry the daughter of this old baron, and I will do so. I will not be led by the nose—tell that to the old patriarch that kept your father's sheep; he knows better than any one else that I will do as I please."'

'Well then,' said Pastourel, with mingled anger and grief, 'tell him to come hither, for if he insists upon it, it is necessary that he should succeed without danger to himself and to us all.'

'How?' said Catharine indignantly, 'will you aid in disappointing this pretty Marquis de Velay?'

'By the tone in which you spoke to him,' said Pastourel, 'I thought that you were not to be counted among his friends.'

'Pah! pah! old father,' said Catharine, simpering and laughing primly, 'we detest a man who says soft things to us, when he is a mere boy, and then neglects us when he is a

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man, but reason comes with age, and I no longer remember what passed eight years ago.'

'Eight years ago?' said Pastourel.

'Yes, yes, you had not then returned to the province, and he came to visit his father's estates with his tutor. Poor boy! he was very pretty in those days.'

Pastourel gazed at Catharine with a strange air, and said:

'And you were pretty then?'

'Why, then he was eighteen, and I was twenty-seven, and I still went by the name of beautiful Catharine.'

'And he fell in love with you?' said Pastourel.

'Does that surprise you, father?'

'No, no, but you, did you love him?'

'*Pecaire*, he was so smooth, so forward, that I had the greatest difficulty in defending myself against the passion.'

'And did you defend yourself from it long?'

'Always,' said Catharine, rising, with an air of dignity.

Pastourel did not reply, but he passed his hand across his forehead muttering sadly:

'It is destiny!'

Then he added aloud:

'You are for him, then, against Galidou?'

'Ah, Galidou is a false marquis; he plays the lordling, and forgets that he was too happy to eat of our bread. It is not he that will espouse Mademoiselle de la Roque.'

'I hope not; but he will not come here unless he thinks that I will consent. I expect you to persuade him.

'I promise to do so. And he shall not espouse her.'

'That interests you closely?'

Catharine turned pale, and replied in a strange tone of menace:

If you love him, let him not marry Charlotte, do you hear? or some misfortune will happen to him, and to you also.'

'Do you forget,' replied Pastourel, 'that I can punish you for such a threat?'

'Bah!' said Catharine, 'this tone and air will do very well for others! you are no more of a sorcerer or magician than my shoe; or you would not have believed the nonsense I just told you about the young marquis. Well, mind me, Galidou, or Marquis Veroni, as you have baptised him at the font of Beelzebub, will never marry Mademoiselle de la Roque, I predict it, I! I will go and send him to you; take good heed to it.'

With these words, Catharine departed with an indignant air, and Pastourel, gazing at her as she went, said:

'This creature will annoy me more than all the others.'

We beg the reader to remark these words, 'all the others.'

There were others then? Who were they? If the reader

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is willing to proceed with this narrative, he will recognise them perhaps as he has already recognised Galidou, under the name of the Marquis of Veroni.

CHAPTER XVII.

We left Pastourel alone, Catharine returning to her home, and Bernard de Velay spurring toward the castle of La Roque. We will enter it before him, and witness the following scene, which passed in a retired apartment on the ground floor. We shall find there two of our old acquaintances, the Baron de la Roque and Jean Couteau. But they were no longer the same men whom we have previously described to our readers; the former was no longer the stern noble, of lofty stature, savage glance, always ready to mount steed, to draw sword, cursing, swearing, using violence to gratify his slightest caprices, and pushing drunkenness to the wildest excess; he he was now a decripit old man, bent double upon his chair, which he left only for the table or the bed—crippled by the gout, acrimonious, but impotent, and furious at his impotence, pondering upon a thought which seemed to have taken complete possession of his soul, although not a word escaped his lips, except, at all times, stifled acclamations, all of which seemed to refer to some project of vengeance. But for what, and against whom did he meditate this vengeance? This no one could divine, not even Charlotte, whom, from time to time, he seemed to designate as its object.

Jean Couteau likewise was no longer the vigorous, joyous huntsman, who had acquired a name for intrepidity which secured him the respect of all the shepherds in the mountains. Less feeble in body than the baron, he had reached a state of almost complete moral decrepitude; his memory was nearly gone, but as is often the case with old men, he would forget what had occurred the preceding day, while the remembrance of that which had long passed, was clear and distinct. Like his old master, Jean Couteau was occupied by a single predominating thought—the thought of his salvation. He passed three-fourths of the day in prayer; his rosary never left his hands, and he exercised his ingenuity in devising modes of penance, and imposing vows upon himself which he fufilled with the most scrupulous exactitude. His former relations with Pastourel had become a ceaseless torment to him.

The resurrection of this man, whom he had seen stretched upon the earth, with his head wounded and bleeding; his appearance in the Wolf's Niche; his presence in Toulouse, in the midst of those men who were assembled in the house of Vergnes; the respect which had been shown him by some, the obedience which he had obtained from all, were, in

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Jean's eyes, so many proofs that he was a supernatural being, a sorcerer given over to Satan, and consequently, an agent of eternal perdition for him who had served him.

Such was the condition of these two men at the moment when we bring them again before the reader. They were seated face to face, and the old seigneur, with drooping head and anxious mien, regretted more than ever that he could not read in the face of the hunter the effect of the words which he was about to address him. Suddenly he raised his head with an air of resolution, and turning to Couteau, he said, in a calm, but gloomy voice:

'Jean, we should think of death!'

Old Couteau started and replied with some agitation:

'Alas, yes, my lord, and happy is he who is not disturbed by the thought that he has not sometimes failed in his duty.'

'You are right, Jean, you are right; and I am not angry with you for saying so; but it cannot be of yourself that you speak thus; you have always been prudent and a friend of justice, while I—'

'Ah, my lord,' said Jean with a heavy sigh, 'each one will have an account of his own to settle with heaven without thinking of that of others. I do not dream of blaming any one; I repent and do penance.'

At any other time the baron would, doubtless, have manifested some curiosity to know the sins which weighed so heavily upon the conscience of Jean Couteau; but he had an object in view which he wished to reach at once, and he said:—

'It is well, my poor Couteau, but you have not reflected that among the means to obtain God's pardon, penance is not always the most efficient.'

These words, uttered in a humble and sanctimonious tone, seemed to make an impression on the old hunter, for he replied hastily:

'I know it, my lord, and if I were rich enough to make some considerable gift to the church, I would not fail to do so.'

The baron could not repress a smile of scorn as he replied:

'Certainly in that way you would obtain the absolution of a priest, but heaven is not at the orders of these men.'

'You blaspheme, my lord,' cried Couteau, making the sign of the cross, and mumbling a Pater Noster.

The baron did not interrupt him, and a moment afterwards resumed:

'Jean, you must pardon me, for when a man's heart is tortured by remorse, he doubts of everything; and still what I said was just. Ah, yes, believe me, there is one way to

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ensure God's mercy; it is to repair as far as lies in our power the harm which we have done.'

'Alas!' said Couteau, 'I do not think that I have harmed any one in all my life; at least knowingly.'

This was a singular answer for a man in such embarrassment respecting his salvation, and still it was the truth. The timorous conscience of the old hunter depicted to him as an unpardonable sin, that which could at most be considered as an act of imprudence, while beneath this semblance of repentance, the inexorable soul of the baron sought only to satisfy a last desire of vengeance.

'I cannot say that,' replied the latter; 'I have done too much harm in this world to appear without dread in the presence of Divine justice, and it is this harm that I would repair.'

'Blessed be the hour when this thought entered your mind!' replied Jean.

'And you can aid me, my good Jean, in my devout and pious resolution.'

'I do not see how.'

'And it will be placed to your account, believe me,' continued the baron, 'you will be absolved from all sin when you have aided in this good work; while, if you refuse, you will burden your soul with an additional crime, and your eternal perdition will be sealed.'

By an inexplicable and instinctive fear, Jean felt himself by no means tempted to join in the good works of the Baron de la Roque, and he replied:

'I am too great a sinner to aid you to repair your faults, my lord. Besides you are rich, and you can easily do it without my assistance.'

'You are mistaken, Jean,' said the baron. 'I can do nothing without your assistance, for you alone can tell me where I can find those whom I have injured, and whose pardon I would fain obtain.'

'Alas, my lord,' said Jean Couteau, growing more and more unwilling to become an instrument in the baron's work of reparation, 'how can a poor man like me know what has become of all those with whom you have had dealings?'

'All those with whom I have had dealings?' rejoined the baron. 'All have not had reason to complain of me, I think.'

'No, my lord, no, certainly,' said Jean with humility, 'but at any rate, it is asking more of me than I can answer.'

'I shall ask you only that which you can answer,' replied the baron. 'For instance, there is one man whom I have wronged out of his fortune, and whom I forced to leave the country. I wish to repair the injuries I have inflicted on him.'

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'If he has left the country,' said Couteau, desirous of evading the baron's question, 'if he has left the country, how can I know—'

'But I suspect that he has returned.'

'Well, then, my lord, send for him.'

'But he conceals himself under a false name,' replied the baron, 'he imagines, doubtless, that I would prosecute him as in times past.'

'Question him.'

'But he would not answer me; he would not believe me were I to assure him of my kind intentions towards him, and he would conceal his real name.'

'What, then, can I do!'

'Ah, my good Jean, if God had not taken away my sight, I should need no assistance to recognise him, but although from the sound of his voice, I think that he is a man whom we have both known for many years, yet I cannot say that it is so. But if to this testimony of my hearing, you would join that of your sight, if you could say to me: "that is indeed the man whom you seek," I would no longer hesitate to restore to him by my testament, that of which I have robbed him, for, as I have said, my thoughts are of death.'

'Is it no more than that, my lord? I will tell you indeed, if you will show me this man.'

'It cannot be but that you must have met him during the six months that he has been in this province.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Jean Couteau suddenly, 'are you one of those who believe, as my daughter Catharine wished one day to persuade me, that the Marquis of Veroni, who lives in such splendour, is no other than the wretch Galidou?'

'Galidou!' cried the baron, while his features suddenly lost the air of sanctimony which they had assumed, 'Galidou! that vile shepherd whom you saved from the teeth of my dogs? that boor who insulted me, and who, but for his flight, would have been hung for burning my castle? has he returned to place himself within reach of my clutches? Oh, *par le diable*! it shall cost him dear!'

'But you said, my lord, that you had repented.'

'Certainly, replied the baron, restraining his fury, and making the sign of the cross, as if in reproof of his violence, 'you must see, however, that there is a great difference between the repentance that I feel at having injured a man of my own rank, and that which would disturb me, at having flayed alive a knave of that sort.'

'That is true,' said Couteau.

'But I do not now refer to Galidou,' resumed the baron; 'I am now speaking of a man who should of right hold a high rank, and whom I have driven from his proper station, for he

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conceals himself beneath a name which does not become his birth.'

'I do not know to whom you refer.'

'And I do not wish to tell you, my dear Jean, lest your judgment might be influenced by the name which I should utter, and thus you might decide less justly. You know how easy it is to form our opinions after the thoughts of others.'

'But how can I recognise this man?' said Couteau.

'Give me your arm, Jean,' said the old baron, 'reach me my crutch, and come with me into the garden. Perhaps you will be able to relieve me from my sad uncertainty without going far.'

Jean hesitated; but forty years of submission are not easily effaced from the heart, and he obeyed the baron's command. They entered the garden, and following the directions of the old man, they proceeded through winding alleys, until they reached a small pavilion, enclosed by green trees and bushes. Some persons within were conversing earnestly together, and the baron felt Jean Couteau's arm tremble as they heard the voice of a man, who said:

'Well then, Charlotte, I will myself conduct you to this place of meeting.'

'God in heaven!' cried Jean, 'that voice!'

The man continued:

'But at what hour will you go?'

'Bernard is to bring me word.'

'How if he should wish to accompany you?'

'I will not permit it.'

Couteau shuddered, and the baron pushed him forward, saying in an under tone:

'Look through the leaves.'

'It is he!' muttered Jean Couteau, in a smothered voice, and speaking to himself, rather than to the baron.

The latter drew him hurriedly away, and said in a whisper:

'Is it not he? is it not Don Jose?'

Jean, without comprehending the danger of the words which had escaped him, already repented having uttered them, and prompted by an impulse still more heedless, perhaps, replied:

'I did not say that it was he, my lord; I do not know, I may be mistaken, I certainly am mistaken, I would not peril my salvation by pointing out an innocent man as a victim to your vengeance.'

'Ah!' cried the baron, grasping Jean more tightly by the arm to prevent him from escaping, 'I ought to take vengeance upon him then, if it be Don Jose.'

'I do not know, I cannot say, my lord. How should I know.

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'From the interview which you had with Pastourel on the day when Don Jose attempted to assassinate him.'

This reply recalled all Jean Couteau's terrors, and he cried in a tone of supplicaton:

'Ah, my lord! my lord! the words of this man, if he is a man, are so many temptations from hell. Do not believe them! do not believe them! they will lead to mischief. Is he not a sorcerer and an impostor!'

Jean's alarm had given the baron time for reflection, and he replied in the sad and humble tone, which he had assumed at the commencement of this interview:

'Ah, my old Jean, am I not as well persuaded of this as you are, and was it not these falsehoods which rendered me so unjust toward Don Jose, to whom I owe and wish to make reparation!'

Jean Couteau's honesty was now assailed on a different side. To see the baron make reparation to Don Jose, the lover of the baroness, appeared to him dishonourable to his old master; he felt a violent repugnance at aiding in a step so humiliating, and he replied with the bluntness which formerly marked his character:

'Oh, my lord, do not be so anxious to make amends to M. de Frias. If you have wronged him, you are quits.'

But the baron was listening no longer to Jean Couteau: a new thought had taken possession of him, and interrupting his old servant, he cried:

'What was it he said to Charlotte?'

'I do not remember; they spoke of a meeting.'

'Yes, yes,' said the baron, 'that suffices; it is enough.'

He then added, with singular vehemence:

'Don Jose de Frias, my fine page, at last you are in my power!'

'What do you mean, my lord?'

'Away, away!' said the baron, 'they shall not always laugh at the blind old man. Oh, the blood of Paula has passed into the veins of her daughter. Good! good! we shall see, we shall see!'

'My lord, you terrify me,' cried Jean, shrinking backward. 'You have made me serve you in some horrid purpose of vengeance.'

'Well then!' said the baron, 'you shall do penance for it by ascending the height of Saint Benoit, upon your knees, and if when you reach the chapel, you look through the grate, and see sister Claude upon her knees in prayer, and smiting her breast, you can tell her in my name, that she will soon hear from me.'

'My lord,' said Jean, 'the baroness is a holy woman, and if she has sinned, which I do not know, she has well redeemed

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her faults, during the fifteen years that she has passed in yonder convent.

'She is so holy,' said the baron, 'that I would fain help to canonise her, and you ought to be well pleased, Jean Couteau, to assist in making her a saint, and when she is in heaven, she will aid you in entering, if you are not there before her, or she will draw you from the hell which you have merited.'

All that ferocity which had formerly characterized the baron's features, reappeared as he uttered these words.

'For the love of heaven, my lord," cried Jean, 'for the love of heaven! undertake nothing, which may prejudice my soul's salvation, I beg you, I implore you! It would be wrong, it would be base.'

'Holla! holla!' cried the baron, in a voice of thunder, 'is there no one here to rid me of this sniveller, this importunate knave?'

'Ah!' exclaimed Jean Couteau, as he withdrew, 'I feared that the curse of heaven would fall upon my head, when I entered your house again.'

'Hence! hence, old dotard!' muttered the baron, dragging himself toward the house, as well as he was able; 'I hold my vengeance in my hands, and it shall be terrible! yes, yes, terrible!'

The baron's cries had reached the pavilion, where Charlotte was conversing with the man whom Jean Couteau had recognised as Don Jose de Frias, and of whom Bernard had spoken to Pastourel, under the name of Vasconcellos. Charlotte hurried out, and beheld her father proceeding with great difficulty, supported by his crutch alone; she ran towards him, and placing her arm beneath his, she said with an air of lively interest:

'Lean upon me, sir!'

The old man started, as if at the touch of an enemy, and replied roughly:

'Leave me, Charlotte; you have something better to do, than to think of a blind old man like me: you are at an age when girls lie to their fathers—when they begin to be perfidious and hypocritical.'

How, sir?' cried Charlotte, 'how have I deserved this reproach!'

The Baron de la Roque regretted the violence which had thus hurried him away; he repressed his indignation, and after a momentary silence, replied:

'Charlotte, my child, when a man suffers, when he is blind, when he feels his inability to seek the aid of which he stands in need, he is oftentimes unjust. I was wrong to complain, for you are a good child, and you have taken better care of me than I deserve.'

Charlotte was accustomed to the ill humour of her father,

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but never before had she heard him excuse it. She was moved, for more than one reason, perhaps, by the turn which the baron had given to his violence, and she said:

'If any one is wrong, my father, it is I, for not being near you when you called.'

The baron assumed an air of gay good humour, and replied:

'And this fault you will repeat upon the instant, for if I mistake not, I hear the gallop of a horse. It is Bernard, is it not? It is he! I feel your arm trembling against mine.'

'Father!' said Charlotte, in confusion.

'Well, well,' cried the baron, 'I will wait until you think fit to tell me the truth, for the marquis loves you.'

Charlotte trembled still more violently.

'And you love him also, do you not?'

'Father—'

'Let it pass! no more of it; but he must not delay to ask me for your hand, for I am hard pressed in another quarter.'

'Oh, my father!' cried Charlotte, 'do not pledge your word before two days have passed—this is all the delay I ask.'

'Why does he not speak at once?' said the old man.

'Because I do not wish it,' replied Charlotte, proudly. 'I do not wish that he should ask for my hand, without the consent of the duke, his father. You can refuse him for a son-in-law, but I am unwilling, if you consent, to be refused for a daughter-in-law.'

'Ah!' muttered the old man, 'it is her mother's pride! So much the better!'

They reached the door of the castle, at the moment when the Marquis de Velay leaped from his horse. He saluted the baron, inquired after his health, and, by a sign, gave Charlotte to understand that he wished to speak with her. As if the old man had seen this signal, he said:

'Go, my children, go! The society of a sick man is not suited to your years. Still, sir marquis, before you leave the castle, oblige me by your presence for a few moments in my chamber. I have a favour to request of you relative to the Marquis of Veroni.'

After having led the old baron to the arm-chair, which he had left to walk to the pavilion, Charlotte rejoined Bernard, and the following conversation occurred between them. But, before we narrate it, it is necessary to make the reader acquainted with the young girl, whom he, as yet, knows only by name.

As the baron had said, Charlotte possessed the blood and pride of her mother, but not her mother's passions. Paula had erred, and she had severely expiated her fault, even at the time, when, as would be thought, she was happy from it. Agitated by remorse, and by the fear of dishonour, she had even meditated a greater crime, and still she had taken refuge

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in penitence. But Charlotte's character was very different from that of her mother's. She had reached the age of twenty years, and nothing had yet disturbed the quietude of her heart. Educated beneath the eyes of the baron, she had scarcely passed the years of her childhood, when she formed her opinion of him. Instructed solely by the presence of this wicked old man, she had learned to look upon vice with aversion. Yet the vices of the baron, instead of engendering, in the heart of his daughter, those virtues which were opposed to them, gave rise only to their opposite faults.

Thus the baron was gross and licentious in his language, while Charlotte spoke with a reserve, which shrunk from the most innocent jest; the baron gave way to anger, and raved and swore; Charlotte was calm, even to insensibility; but the baron soon forgot his anger, while Charlotte stored up her resentment. M. de la Roque loved the pleasures of the table, and drank to excess: Charlotte pushed sobriety to the verge of the ridiculous. The father braved opinion, the daughter would have preferred any suffering, to the humiliation of the slightest blame. The baron passed for a brutal and tyrannical father; Charlotte enacted the part of a most submissive and devoted daughter; there was much affected ostentation in the vices of the baron, but there was a humility still more affected in the vices of his daughter.

Striving thus against the influence of her father's character, perhaps, also, from motives of calculation, Charlotte tried to merit commendation in all those points in which the baron was deserving of contempt. But, on the other hand, if she gave alms to the poor, whom he repulsed, she was pitiless towards the vagrant, whom he sometimes received with kindness; and we are obliged to confess, that there was more honesty and humanity in this old man, whose life had been a tissue of vicious or shameful deeds, than in this young girl, whose every action was irreproachable.

When the baron directed some extraordinary expenditure of money, Charlotte was careful not to countermand it or to blame it, but she dressed herself more plainly, or sold some ornament of value. This became known, and her conduct was the subject of general eulogium. But her virtues were so far from being virtues, that, but for the contrast of her father's vices, she would not have known how to appear virtuous.—Pride was the main feature—the very basis of her character. Yet nature had thrown an admirable veil over her lofty and implacable spirit; the expression of her face was sweet—her eyes were sad and serious—her form was slender—her step careless—her eyes languid and plaintive. These outward attractions would have deceived the shrewdest observers, and the Marquis de Velay could not be numbered among these.

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'Your father is growing kind,' said Bernard; 'your angelic patience has subdued him.'

'My father,' replied Charlotte, 'is, from his rank, acquainted with those rules of good breeding, which are indispensable in the presence of a man of your station.'

'It is for this reason that I would always be near you, to lessen your trials, and to alleviate the cares of your position.'

This was very prettily said, but Charlotte had something else to think of.

'You are too often here, as it is, Bernard,' she replied. 'I yield perhaps too readily to the consolation of having near me a heart that is not destitute of pity.'

'Destitute of pity!' said Bernard. 'Do you apply this term to the most ardent affection?'

'Marquis de Velay!' said Charlotte.

'The purest!' added Bernard.

'I do not doubt it,' rejoined Charlotte; 'but that your presence here may give rise to no comments, you must not prolong it, unless you have a valid title to do so.'

'And is not this my highest wish?'

'I am pleased to think so, Marquis de Velay, but you are not ignorant that your will is subject to that of the duke, your father.'

'D'Auterive has just arrived with full powers.'

'But you do not know their import.'

'Ah!' cried Bernard, 'he must do as I would have him.'

'Bernard,' replied Charlotte, 'there is, as you are aware, a man more powerful than us all, who, as I know, can dictate the course of M. D'Auterive.'

'Old Pastourel.'

'Have you seen him?'

'I have.'

'And at what hour can I visit him?'

Bernard was silent for a moment; he then cried, impatiently:

'Hold, Charlotte! I must own that I cannot bear to be in the hands of a man like this. What concern has an astrologer, whose origin and name are unknown, with the destiny of the son of the Duke de Nevres?'

'Bernard,' said Charlotte, sadly, 'it is evident that you have always been happy; you have not been taught to bow the head to necessities which wound at once the heart and the pride; but this lesson must be learned.'

'I know not what reasons the Comte de Auterive, the Marquis of Veroni, and others, may have to submit their designs to the will of this Pastourel, but I have none.'

If Bernard had glanced at Charlotte as he spoke thus, he would have observed the change in her features, notwithstanding her efforts to conceal it. She was silent; she feared

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lest the agitation of her voice might betray that of the heart; but she scanned Bernard with a piercing glance, as he added:

'Thank God, I have no secret to conceal!'

'I believe it, Bernard, and it is for this reason that I have accepted the homage of your love. But do we know the secrets of the past? Has not your mother, like mine, retired to the Benedictines?'

'And who knows—'

Bernard's face was covered with a blush.

'I do not pretend to judge of the motives which have induced my mother to retire from the world: but whatever they were, they cannot be honourable to me, since—'

A disdainful smile played around Charlotte's lips, as Bernard continued:

'Since they are so to her, I am sure of it.' But, in any case, they are too far above what this Pastourel can know, to compel me to have recourse to him.'

Charlotte did not reply to this apology for the duchess; she uttered merely the words:

'It must be so.'

Bernard made a gesture of impatience.

Charlotte resumed her most majestic air, and said:

'You know as well as I do, that it must be so.'

'As you please,' replied Bernard. 'This man will expect you to-day, at the hour of five.'

'I will go.'

'You will not go alone?'

'I will go alone,' said Charlotte.

Bernard appeared dissatisfied, and Charlotte added:

'Marquis de Velay, the only apparent relations which yet exist between us, are those of ordinary friendship; if this visit offends other sentiments in your bosom, I regret it, but it is my duty to admit no witness to this interview. This ought to suffice; duty is meritorious only when it is hard to fulfil. I will fulfil this as I have fulfilled others, should my happiness be the forfeit.'

This speech, begun in a serious tone, was ended with emotion, and accompanied by a tear. Bernard, the repentant Bernard, who knew with what pious devotion Charlotte had accomplished the most trying duties, was ashamed to manifest the least dissatisfaction, and he at once replied:

'Go then, Charlotte, go!'

The young girl did not reward her lover with the slightest show of gratitude for this compliance, but replied:

'You will not forget that my father wishes to speak with you.'

'I will go to him, Charlotte, but the hour of your appoint-

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ment is still distant, and you know that I cannot be too much with you.'

'Return to the pavilion, Bernard,' said Charlotte, 'you will find me there.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

If our readers have not forgotten the suspicions which the Baron de la Roque had harboured concerning the culpable intercourse of Don Jose and the baroness, they will understand, perhaps, how the following scene might have occurred which otherwise would appear odious beyond all probability.

When young Bernard entered the baron's presence, the latter appeared absorbed in profound thought; it seemed as if he had not heard him approach, for when the marquis said:

'I am now at your service, my lord baron,, the old man started and replied:

'Ah, is it you, marquis? I did not expect you so soon; I was recalling my recollections, and they are so harrowing that I have yielded to the pain which these old wounds inflict, when, after long years, they open afresh.'

'*Ma foi*, baron!' replied Bernard, who already regretted the concession which he had made to Charlotte, 'every age has its cares, and those of the present are far more keen than those of the past.'

'Do you complain, young man? and of what? Of some amorous chagrins? of your inability to gratify some caprice? Wait until age and infirmity come upon you, and you will then know the meaning of misfortune. You are young, wealthy, handsome, brave. If a woman slights you, you can give her a rival in one more rich and beautiful; if a man insults you, you can call him to an account, sword in hand; if you are ambitious, the future lies before you.'

Were this anger and this sadness real, or was it all a well-enacted farce? But the expression of the baron's features was so melancholy that Bernard gazed upon him with more attention as he continued:

'Wait, wait before you complain, until you see the vengeance for which you have tarried twenty years escape you, because you have no longer the strength to accomplish it. Wait until a new outrage threatens your old age, and you feel yourself nailed to the chair on which you sit without the power to avert it!'

For a moment Bernard imagined that the baron's anger was directed against himself, when he spoke of a new outrage which threatened him. Had not the young marquis ventured to speak to Charlotte of flight? had he not whispered the project to several persons? He was greatly embarrassed, therefore; he endeavoured to reply in a firm tone, but his emotion

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did not escape M. de la Roque, as he said in a stammering voice:

'I do not comprehend you, baron. Of what outrage do you speak?'

The baron was unable to repress a movement of undissembled anger, for, notwithstanding his blindness, he divined the cause of Bernard's agitation. He checked himself, however, and continued in a sententious tone:

'Marquis, marquis, all respect for the noblest names of the kingdom is fast vanishing, and we cannot wonder that the boor and the menial mock at our claims, when our own children show themselves capable of this neglect.'

'No one,' said Bernard, still anxious about himself, 'no one, my lord baron, has failed in respect toward you.'

'Alas, my poor boy,' rejoined the baron in a paternal tone, 'we men are blind to mischief, when it is a woman's mind that plans it.'

'What mean you?' said Bernard, who began to understand that the baron's accusations were not aimed at him.

'Marquis de Velay, I may die with despair in my heart at seeing my dearest hopes deceived, but I will not bear with me to the tomb the remorse which I should feel for having assisted in deceiving a noble family.'

Bernard's agitation was visible in the accent with which he replied:

'What is it? what has happened?'

'I may be deceived, Bernard, but if it were true that Charlotte could so far have forgotten the blood which flows in her veins, as to be enamoured of an adventurer—'

'Just heaven!' exclaimed the marquis.

'If, freed by my infirmities from that watchfulness which is the chief safeguard of a maiden's honour, she should have forgotten the respect which she owes to her name—'

'Baron de la Roque,' said Bernard, 'it is impossible! I would swear it!'

Although blind, the baron knew from the change in Bernard's voice that his defence of Charlotte was but the involuntary cry of a man whose mistress is accused, while doubt, suspicion and indignation, are making a tempest of his soul.

He continued, therefore, with that smooth subtlety whose arrows penetrate more deeply than the heaviest blows:

'Oh, it is well, then, Bernard; I thank you, I believe you, for you cannot be deceived so easily as I might be, and you can testify that it is from a motive for which she need not blush, that she receives the Portuguese, Vasconcellos, every day while I sleep.'

'Every day while you sleep?' cried Bernard.

'Since you know it,' said the baron, 'I need not be disquieted.'

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'But—'

'I know your views, Bernard. They honour me; and if aught disturbs the satisfaction which I feel, it is the fear lest you might one day reproach me for having abused the confidence of your youth, but I am now tranquil.'

For some moments Bernard had not listened to the baron; he was absorbed by the jealousy which the old man's words had excited in his soul. The baron had ceased speaking, and Bernard was still occupied with his thoughts. M. de la Roque impatiently endured this silence, the movements of which he could not watch, and he suddenly interrupted it by saying, in a tone of bitterness, which contrasted strangely with the air of content which he had affected a moment before:

'Has your happiness put you to sleep, sir marquis?'

Bernard started up with a bound, exclaiming:

'Baron de la Roque, Charlotte is deceiving me—Charlotte is deceiving you, also! I am sure of it! I would swear it!'

The baron rose suddenly, as if these words had filled him with dismay.

'Marquis,' he cried, 'you are too honourable a man to say a thing like that, without believing it, without having proofs of it.'

'Baron,' replied Bernard, 'as you said a moment since, men are blind to mischief when it is woman's mind that plans it; I am convinced of Charlotte's falsehood, but if you ask me for proofs, I have none—none that are certain.'

'It is proofs that I need, in order to avenge myself, in order to inflict chastisement,' rejoined the baron. 'And these proofs I demand of you, marquis. She receives this Vasconcellos every day, I am sure of it, but they escape from me when I think to surprise them; they laugh at the poor blind old man; they insult him, and I have no one—no one to avenge me!'

'Oh!' exclaimed Bernard, 'I will avenge you, and I will avenge myself!'

'Marquis de Velay,' replied the baron, 'I demand but one thing of you. Whatever may be your determination concerning this Vasconcellos, swear to me upon your honour that you will not take a step against him without my permission.'

Indignant as he was, Bernard revolted against this proposition, but the baron added with a tone of authority which imposed respect upon the young man:

'Believe me, marquis, I will not arrest your arm when it is time to strike, but my rights must precede yours, and I will denounce you as a man without honesty or honour, if, like them, you take advantage of my infirmities, to anticipate my justice.'

The marquis promised to submit to the guidance of the baron, and the latter had no difficulty in inducing him to play the spy upon Charlotte's steps. An opportunity was

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near at hand; the mysterious visit which she was resolved to make to the sorcerer in the ruins, must conceal, probably, some mischievous project, perhaps the arrangement for her flight with this Vasconcellos. Bernard awaited the hour with eager impatience, resolved to obey the baron, and to recount to him faithfully, all that he might discover. But the hasty disposition of the young marquis did not permit events to follow the course which the baron had expected.

Before we relate the concluding incidents of this so complicated, and still, so simple narrative, it is necessary to inform the reader more particularly concerning the principal personage of this story, and with this design, we lay before him the sketch of an old manuscript, in which the history of this mysterious man is recounted. We will extract from this manuscript only such portions as have particular reference to this narration.—The life of the man to whom it relates, would furnish matter for volumes.

CHAPTER XIX.

Giacomo Leone Spaffa, prince of Puzzano, marquis of Veroni, was born in Sicily, in 1655. The family of Puzzano held a lofty rank, and lived in great splendour, although the estates from which they drew their revenues were by no means considerable. It was a matter of curiosity, therefore, to discover whence these immense resources could spring, which sufficed to gratify the most costly caprices, and their origin was at last discovered, or suspected rather. The Prince of Puzzano, to wit, proprietor of the palace of Pallianti, which was situated on the sea-shore, and owner of a small bay perfectly secure, and reaching to the interior of his gardens, was accused of opening this asylum to smugglers of every description, and, what was still worse, to pirates from the coast of Barbary, who took refuge here from storms, and from the pursuit of Christian vessels.

The charge was a serious one, and might have ruined the family of Puzzano, when the prince, who was then forty-five years of age, espoused the Comtesse Fiamma de Landeoli; of whom many things were said which we are unwilling to recount, but who passed for a woman to whom the viceroy refused nothing. However this may have been, it was from this marriage, and sooner than would have been requisite in any other, that Giacomo, our hero, was born. His youth was passed as might have been expected in a position like his, and Giacomo, freed from all strict supervision, was still almost a child, when he had all the passions of a young man. At seventeen years of age, he eloped with the daughter of a certain Bruzzone, intendant of the revenues of the Dominacale

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at Palermo, and carried her on board a corsair, where he remained with her nearly two years.

This injury to a man of obscure birth indeed, but who was connected with the affairs of the church, was more fatal to the family of Puzzano, than all the culpable actions of which they had before been guilty. The minds of the people were aroused by the long impunity which they had enjoyed; the priests denounced from the pulpit the infamous protection granted by the prince to the infidel pirates, and if he had not left Sicily, he would have been exposed to the resentment of an exasperated populace. It was during this adventure of Giacomo's, therefore, that the prince of Puzzano retired to Naples, with a considerable fortune, but deprived of the resources which he found in the secret protection that he accorded to the pirates of the sea.

Now, while the father expiated the follies of the son, the latter, safe on board his vessel, had attacked a ship from Pisa, in which was found a considerable quantity of merchandise. Ignorant of that which had occurred during his absence, Giacomo brought his prize to the castle Pallianti, and was greatly surprised at finding it abandoned by his family, and confided to the care of a steward and a few domestics merely. Notwithstanding this, he secured his prize in the harbour, and confined his prisoners in the castle. It was on this occasion, that the first adventure occurred to our hero, which is connected, in some respects, with the present narrative.

Among the men whom he had taken prisoners on board the Pisan ship, were two individuals, very different in character and appearance. One of them, named Festavanti, did not appear in the slightest degree afflicted at the sad destiny which awaited him, for, like all his companions in misfortune, he was to be re-embarked on board the corsair, carried to some island in the Greek Archipelago, and sold as a slave. This Festavanti was a sculptor of Verona, and was reputed to be a skilful craftsman in the art of imitating the human face by a composition of melted wax, coloured like life. It was a means of ensuring his fortune, he said, in any country. This art, which is now employed to adorn the hair-dresser's shop merely, was then considered as nearly allied to magic, and it was seldom that these images were used, unless in sorceries or conjurations. His reputation had spread so widely, that it aroused the suspicions of the inquisition, and when Festavanti was taken by Giacomo Puzzano, he was flying from a summons of this dreadful tribunal.

The other person whom Giacomo had taken prisoner, was a Milanese Jew, who had just realized a brilliant speculation at Pisa, and had taken passage on board this ship, with a view to settle some affairs at Montpellier. This man, unlike

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Festavanti, wept incessantly, and cursed the fatal chance which had thrown him into the power of Giacomo.

Our young adventurer was singularly interested in Festavanti, who, when on ship-board, had shown him various specimens of his art. Thus, he had fabricated for Giacomo, a mask, which so exactly represented the features of one of the sailors, that in the evening twilight, he had mingled with the crew, and had been taken for the man whose visage he had borrowed.

This talent of Festavanti's was very welcome to Giacomo, and he promised to make his fortune, if he would enter his services, an offer which the artist eagerly accepted. In the meanwhile the day had arrived on which the prisoners were to be embarked, and sent to be sold as slaves. According to the bargain made with the captain of the corsair, every man retained by Giacomo, was to be paid for as if he had been sold at a slave market. They had agreed upon a price of three hundred crowns for Festavanti, when the Jew, who was named Ben-Aissar, requested a private interview with the Moorish captain.

Notwithstanding the rapidity with which we are obliged to hurry over this recital, we will repeat the conversation which passed between the Jew and Giacomo, in order to show the origin of that strange association which we have met with in the course of this narration.

Giacomo, when informed of the wish of Ben-Aïssar, received him in the presence of Festavanti; he had covered his face with a mask that represented the features of the Moorish captain who commanded his vessel, wishing to avail himself of this opportunity to put the talent of the artist to the test.

The Jew for a moment appeared embarrassed, but Giacomo's first words restored his courage.

'You have requested an interview with me, and I have granted it,' he said to Ben-Aissar, 'but if your object is to implore mercy, you need not waste your time in idle supplications, or in tears, or in useless assurance. If you should give me fifty-fold your value, I would not grant your prayer. You shall never return to Italy to inform against us; you are destined to live and die in slavery.'

'What has the Moorish corsair to dread from the accusation of a poor Jew?' said Ben-Aissar. 'Giacomo Spaffa alone might harbour such a fear, and I know that he keeps near him that man, who, as well as I, can give information to the viceroy.'

'You are deceived, Jew; this worthy Festavanti enjoys one advantage over you; he has had some dealings with the Holy Inquisition, and he is too familiar with the customs of the mild guardian of the faith, to trust himself within the

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reach of its clutches. Besides, I do not see how your freedom can profit my associate, and I promise you he will not expend a single piece of gold for the sake of keeping you with him.'

'May God soften your heart!' said the Jew, 'you have robbed me of my treasures, and I abandon them without regret; but it is not merely because Festavanti stands ill with the Inquisition that the brave Giacomo keeps him near him; it is because of his cunning talent in moulding wax faces, which still deceive no one.

'You think so?' cried Festavanti, glancing at Giacomo with an air of triumph.

'I do not say,' replied the Jew, 'that at first sight this mask which hides the face of signor Giacomo might not deceive a man who had no interest in discovering the deception; but if your handiwork,' continued the Jew, while Giacomo removed the mask, 'if your wares were subjected to the test of the microscope and the thumb, and if the eye of a Lombard should scan them, feature by feature, the truth would be soon discovered, while those which I fabricate would defy the most cunning usurers of Italy.'

'Ha!' cried the young prince, 'what mean you, master Jew? What craft do you understand so well?'

'Oh,' replied Ben-Aissar, 'why, that which gives a bit of tin and antimony the appearance and sound of a silver crown. This is a disguise more profitable than those which are made from the wax of signor Festavanti.'

'And probably,' said Giacomo, 'the treasures that you abandon to us with such generosity, are made of no better materials?'

'They are of all kinds, my lord, but this is a work which requires solitude and secrecy, and if I were owner of a castle like this, in a few years, I would become monarch of all the Indies.'

These words furnished Giacomo with ample matter for reflection, and he said to Ben-Aissar:

'How did you discover this secret?'

'*Ma foi*,' said the Jew, 'I have spent thirty years of my life in prosecuting the great work; I have lost over my furnaces more gold and more years than I have yet to hope for, and my experience in alchemy has taught me this truth—that to have gold, it is necessary not to make it.'

It was in the course of this interview, that an association was formed between these three persons which, in after years, included an entire province.

In order to reach his aim, Giacomo was initiated into the secrets of alchemy by Ben-Aissar, and into those of his art by Festavanti. But too young to employ with discretion the power which he held in his hands, he made use of it to

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gratify his passions. Concealed under various masks, he had discovered more than one domestic secret, and had afterwards enjoyed the gratification of divulging it. Some indiscretions of this nature, together with his studies in alchemy, gained him the reputation of a man devoted to the occult sciences, and in direct communication with the devil. The prince, his father, had died after a few days' illness, and rumour did not hesitate to say that Giacomo had hastened his disease. This was a fearful calumny, but the most frightful suspicions hovered over him, and while he was pondering upon the means of escape, he was arrested and thrown into prison. His trial was prolonged for more than two years, and what was very remarkable, although almost all the instruments which he employed in the fabrication of counterfeit coin, as well as the masks which he had worn, had been seized, yet the minds of the judges were not for a moment directed towards the truth.

The furnaces and alembics were employed, as they thought, in the preparation of filters and magical potions: the masks were the images of those persons whom he wished to devote to the powers of hell; at last, after the most minute investigation, Giacomo was condemned to be burned as a sorcerer. His family was implicated in this sentence; his mother was exiled from Naples with her daughter Leonore, then seven or eight years of age, and nothing could save the Prince Puzzano, even from the disgrace of a public execution.

It was under these circumstances, that the inventive genius of Festavanti displayed its resources. And if the fact, which we are about to relate, were not attested by numerous witnesses, we should hesitate to recount it. According to the sentence rendered by the tribunal of the Holy Inquisiton, the Prince of Puzzano was taken from prison, and led to the quay of the chiaia, where the funeral pile was prepared. He was placed upon it, the combustible materials which surrounded him were kindled, and he disappeared from the eyes of the multitude in flames and smoke. Still he did not perish. The stratagem by which the friends of Puzzano rescued him from death, was a very simple one. These friends were already numerous, they were already initiated, not into the secret of the manufacture, the principal seat of which was at Pallianti, but into the association, and Puzzano was their hope and their chief. They lulled to sleep the prudence of the judges and of the civil authority; no petitions were made to save him, no manœuvres to retard his punishment. On the contrary, those most interested in his safety were prodigal of their anathemas against the vile sorcerer, who had sold himself to the prince of darkness. The pile was prepared upon the quay of chiaia, exactly over the spot where one of the largest sewers, in Naples flowed beneath this quay, and

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emptied itself into the sea. An open space had been left in the centre of the pile, which was strewn with light loose pieces of wood, which the condemned could easily thrust aside with his feet.

During the night in which the pile was erected, his friends had removed the flagging with which the quay was paved, excavated the ground, and pierced through the vault of the sewer. A slight wooden ladder, which would probably be consumed by the fire above, led from the platform to the sewer, at the outlet of which, a boat was in readiness to bear Puzzano beyond the reach of his enemies. All this succeeded admirably, and the familiars of the Holy Inquisition were still chanting around the pile, which had been constructed so as to spread abroad a dense smoke, while Giacomo was already half a league from the Bay of Naples, where he was taken on board a brigantine, which bore him in safety to the coast of France.

Giacomo was at this time twenty-five years of age, and the lesson which he had just received, made but a weak impression upon him, for instead of satisfying his thirst for adventure, it inspired him with a taste for strange and romantic exploits.

This event took place in the year 1680, and it was at this time that Giacomo, who was rejoined by his companion Festavanti, fitted out several galleys and resumed the trade of a corsair. To secure the protection of some constituted power, he turned Mahometan, and established the seat of his operations at Tripoli. It was here that he began to establish relations with the various governments of the Barbary coast, and it was at this time that he became acquainted with the Comte de Frias, who was then governor of the *Presides*. From the indulgence which the latter often showed Puzzano, it was evident that, even at that time, he was one of his accomplices. Still, Giacomo's attention was wholly occupied with piratical cruises, when the following adventure gave a different direction to his enterprises.

From the description which we have given of Pastourel in the commencement of this narrative, we cannot but believe that in his youth, he must have been endowed with remarkable beauty. This beauty was Giacomo's greatest enemy (for Giacomo and Pastourel are one and the same person). He encountered few females, in truth, who were not fascinated by that determined mien, that bold glance, that lofty commanding tone, which he acquired by the exercise of a power almost unlimited, and beside this, neither anxiety for his own safety, nor any enterprise, however profitable, could tear him from the bands which he had imposed upon himself. We are not called upon to recount all the strange adventures which marked the extraordinary career of this man, but we must

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relate one which has a direct reference to this narrative. We request our readers to remember that the Princess of Puzzano, Giacomo's mother, had been exiled. She had retired to France, where the city of Toulouse had been assigned to her as a place of residence, and dwelt there with her daughter Leonore; here Giacomo often visited her, sometimes under one disguise, sometimes under another, while even his sister was kept in ignorance of the name and character of this stranger, whose visits were accompanied by the most magnificent presents. This premised, we will relate the adventure which proved, if we may so speak, the point of departure for all the events which we have recounted to our readers.

As we have said, the Prince of Puzzano made frequent visits to his mother, now in one costume, now in another, but that which distinguished him still more effectually than this diversity of attire, was the art with which he changed the expression, nay, almost the features of his face, without resorting to the masks of Festavanti. But whether he wore his hair of a light or dark hue, whether he gave to his features a tinge of the most delicate fairness, or of the brown and olive complexion of Spain, whether he bent his frame, and furrowed his brow with the wrinkles of old age, or whether he presented the aspect of a young student of the university, Giacomo always displayed an air of authority, of command, of moral force, which marked him as a man of no ordinary pretensions.

One evening, after an absence of three years, he was proceeding through a deserted street, disguised as a muleteer, when he paused on hearing some one advance cautiously behind him, for he was of opinion, that it is better to have one's friends as well as one's enemies in front than at one's back. The night was dark, for, at this time, Toulouse, as well as every other city in France, was not lighted by lanterns of any kind. Every man carried about him his weapons of defence, and Giacomo was armed with a long Catalonian cutlass or poignard, and a large knotted club.

The individual whom he had heard was probably of the same opinion with himself as to the respective position which should be maintained by two individuals who have cause to fear each other, for Giacomo had no sooner stopped, than the steps which he had heard behind him stopped also.

This circumstance induced our adventurer to suppose that he had been observed and perhaps recognised; for his costume was by means adapted to excite the cupidity of ordinary thieves. He was aware that it had been suspected for some time past, in Naples, that he was still in existence, and it was not unlikely that the information had been transmitted to the magistrates of Toulouse.

The parliament of Toulouse, like all the parliaments of the

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kingdom, had inherited the claims of the estates; and although the absolute sway of Louis XIV. had greatly reduced these claims, still some few prerogatives, rather tolerated than recognised, had escaped the jealous authority of the king, and among them must be numbered that of the general police of the city, which, according to the interpretation of the parliament, embraced the right of surrendering criminals to a foreign state. The Prince of Puzzano knew this; he knew that if an agent of the Neopolitan government should come to demand his arrest parliament would grant it, less indeed from a love of justice, than for the sake of exercising a power which was daily gliding from its grasp, and of confirming it by an act which could not fail to attract attention. This was the cause of his alarm, when he heard the footsteps which followed him stop at the same time with his own, for, as we have said, his apparel was not calculated to inspire robbers with the hopes of reaping profit from an encounter with him.

The spot where Giacomo paused was close by a garden wall, and at a short distance from him he observed a gate set deep in the thickness of the stone work. He stole cautiously into this recess, and waited the approach of the individual who followed him. After a few moments he heard steps anew, but these came from an opposite direction of the street, so that Giacomo imagined that he was intercepted by two enemies. His first thought was of flight. He now resolved to rid himself of one of his assailants, and he was about to leave the embrasure in which he stood, when he heard the bolts which fastened the gate, drawn carefully by some one on the inner side. By a mechanical movement he pushed it, entered the garden, and found himself standing face to face with a woman who said to him in the softest tone:

'You have come very late, monseigneur!'

Giacomo had been exposed to too many dangers, he had risked his life in too many hazardous adventures, not to have acquired that presence of mind which takes advantage of any circumstance that presents itself. At her first word he imagined that he had taken the place of some gallant of high rank, since he had been addressed by the title of monseigneur; he divined that the female who met her lover in this way, must have reasons for secrecy, since she employed such mystery, and he replied boldly:

'Monseigneur cannot come this evening, and he has sent me to inform you of it.'

A cry of grief and terror was the answer to these tidings.

'What! cannot come this evening! Why, it is impossible! —Or will he forsake me?'

The mind of Giacomo was so constituted that at this reply all fears for his own safety vanished, and the only emotion

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which disturbed him, was an eager cusiosity to understand the mystery in which he found himself implicated.

'Monseigneur is incapable of forsaking you, but business of great importance—'

'Has he told you nothing more?'

'Monseigneur is not in the habit of confiding his secrets to those whom he employs, and although he judged me worthy to be sent this errand, yet he has not told me the reason which prevents him from coming.'

A long silence followed this reply; suddenly the female cried with a strange accent of determination:

'Well then, tell your master since he cannot come this evening, it is useless for him ever to return; my lot is fixed, and I shall know how to accomplish the sacrifice.'

'Do not take this desperate resolution, fair lady,' said Giacomo. 'I have some influence with monseigneur, although I appear to be far beneath him, and if I knew what support, what assistance you expected from him, perhaps I could determine him to keep his promises.'

'I thank you,' replied the female, 'but I would not owe to the intercession of a stranger that which his own gratitude has not dictated in my behalf.'

This word produced a change in Giacomo's ideas; a forsaken mistress does not speak of gratitude, and he now became still more curious to understand the nature of an intrigue, which was carried on by nocturnal interviews, and in which there was no question of love.

'Listen, madam,' he replied, 'I think, nay, I am sure, that monseigneur desires nothing more warmly than to prove to you his gratitude, but it is necessary to leave the time and means to him; and if you will tell me where he can see you to-morrow morning, and what you wish him to do in the mean while, I am certain that he will not fail.'

Another silence followed these words, but the moment when the unknown dame was about to reply, the steps that Giacomo had heard approached the gate from either extremity of the street, and paused almost at the same instant in front of it. It appeared as if the two individuals had met, and paused to observe each other before proceeding farther. At last one of them spoke and said:

'It seems that you have reached the place where you wish to enter, for you do not continue on your way.'

'*Ma foi*, M. Barati,' replied the other, 'but it seems we are both going to the same place, since you have stopped as well as I.'

'It is he!' murmured the young female in a tone of dismay; 'what did you tell me then?'

He must have despatched his business sooner than he ex-

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pected,' whispered Giacomo, while he who was addressed by the name of Barati, replied:

'Yes, my lord duke, I have reached the spot to which I was going, though not to enter, but to prevent you from entering.'

The sound of a sword leaving its scabbard was heard, and the duke replied, quickly:

'Well then, sir advocate, I shall be obliged to clear the way.'

'Duke de Nevres,' replied Barati, 'you know me well enough to be assured that I am not to be terrified at a sword.'

'True, *pardieu!* for I have seen you in full parliament present the sword of honour, which is bestowed yearly upon that student of the university who has borne away the prize at fencing; but we who wear it have a fashion of wielding this weapon which will perplex your skill; I counsel you, therefore, to give way, or your blood be upon your own head.'

'We will not fight, sir; my blood will be neither upon your head nor upon mine, neither will you enter,' said Barati, 'for there needs but one word from me to make you pause. I know your errand to this house.'

'*Pardieu*,' said the duke, laughing, 'you have found here a reason, truly diverting in my eyes. You know that I am going to the President Lostanges, to break off your marriage with his daughter, the beautiful Armande. I do not wish to conceal it.'

'But I know,' replied Barati, 'by what means you expect to succeed.'

'I care as little to conceal these means as I do my object. I intend to tell the president that you, master Barati, an advocate of parliament, have, from among the documents of a suit entrusted to you in my absence, suppressed a letter from my uncle, the Marquis de Suboise, to my mother, which established my rights as his heir, and which annulled the clauses of a prior will.'

'This letter is in existence and in my keeping, Duke de Nevres,' said Barati. 'I can restore it to you, but it will be necessary to produce it as it is, if you would revive this suit, and I declare to you that this letter contains the following sentence:

'"Notwithstanding the acknowledgement which you have made to me of your error, and although I know that your son has no right either to the name he bears, or to the fortune that he has inherited, yet I will destroy the testament which I have made to his prejudice.—Now, that a decree of parliament has legitimated his birth, I am unwilling to suffer the slightest suspicion to rest upon the name that he bears, and I will sacrifice my resentment to the honour of my family."'

The duke did not reply, and Giacomo laughed within him-

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self at the secret which he had just learned, when Barati continued:

'Why this testament has not been revoked, is a question I cannot answer, but you have heard the grounds on which to base your title, and I thought that I was doing my duty as a faithful advocate in suppressing it.'

'And you will do the duty of a friend in placing this letter in my hands, master Barati. But where the devil was my mother's wit, when she wrote me that she had left among her papers a letter which secured to me my uncle's heritage?'

'She had forgotten, perhaps, the preamble that preceded the declaration.'

'My mother was not apt to forget these things, master Barati; my mother was a woman of sense; but however it may be, let us go to your house, show me the writing in question, and I promise to meddle no more with your amorous and matrimonial affairs, for, between ourselves, it was rather to punish your misdemeanour, than to protect this silly Armande, that I undertook this foolish commission. Come! come!'

With this, the two individuals departed, and Giacomo found himself alone with Mademoiselle Armande de Lostanges, with whose name and rank he was now acquainted, although she had not the least suspicion of his own.

During this interview, Armande had kept profound silence, but when they had retired, she muttered in a smothered voice:

'The Duke de Nevres is a wretch!'

'*Ma foi*, my fair demoiselle,' resumed Giacomo, in a tone very different from that which he had hitherto assumed, 'had I been in his place, I should not, perhaps, have resisted an argument so direct as that which young Barati addressed to him, but that which the Duke de Nevres cannot do, another can do in his stead, and that other is myself.'

'You, sir,' replied Mademoiselle de Lostanges, 'you cannot have that influence over my father which the Duke de Nevres could exert. It is not merely by accusing M. Barati of suppressing this document that he could have brought about the rupture of a marriage, resolved upon by my father, and which my tears and my mother's prayers have not been able to avert.'

'If the means which the Duke de Nevres possessed would have been effectual, they would be equally so in the hands of another. Do you know these means?'

It was not until this moment that a slight feeling of alarm disturbed Armande, and that she was aware of the singularity of her position in conversing thus familiarly of an affair so private, with a man with whom she was entirely unacquainted, and one who had announced himself as emissary of the Duke de Nevres.

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She replied, therefore, with a faltering voice:

'I thank you, sir, for the protection which you offer me, but I neither can, nor ought to accept it from a stranger.'

'And from a muleteer,' said Giacomo, laughing. 'Well then, my fair demoiselle, I ask you but one thing more. What day is appointed for the marriage which you wish to avert?'

'To-morrow!'

'To-morrow gives me but little time to take my measures if you will not aid me. If I had but a week, but three days before me, I could promise you that this marriage should not take place, for I am greatly interested in your behalf; I know not why, but I feel quite ill-disposed toward this M. Barati, and very anxious to make the Duke de Nevres repent of his baseness.'

The tone in which these words were uttered, was so like that of a man of superior rank, that Mademoiselle de Lostanges suspected that some personage of importance was concealed beneath this garb of a muleteer.

'Who are you then, sir?' she said; 'for you are certainly not in the service of the Duke de Nevres, as you told me.'

'Listen, fair demoiselle,' replied Giacomo, 'to the story of my night's adventure.'

He then related to her, but with the reserve necessary to his safety, how he had feared an assault in the night, how he had concealed himself in the recess of the garden gate, and had thus involuntarily discovered her secret.

'All this does not tell me who you are,' replied Mademoiselle de Lostanges, who now greatly regretted her confidence.

'I cannot tell you that,' rejoined Giacomo, 'for my name must for ever remain a secret. But it is not the less true that I have the wish and the ability to serve you. The thought pleases me, fascinates me, and perhaps the danger which I may run, renders this desire the more ardent. Confide in chance, then, mademoiselle; it often protects us better than the best contrived plans. Tell me, then, this *ultima ratio*—I mean to say, this last means by which the duke could induce your father to break off this marriage, and I pledge you my word of honour that I will use it in your behalf.'

Armande hesitated and replied:

'This means, sir, is a secret that I cannot reveal to the first comer, for it concerns persons who are already exposed to too many dangers, and I am unwilling to increase them. This secret, sir, would, I am sure of it, have changed my father's purpose, whose strict integrity would never pardon M. Barati, for an act of treason in favour of the enemies of our king and our religion; but this secret would remain without danger for those whom it concerns, when confided to a father, and not to a magistrate.'

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'I am no magistrate, mademoiselle; and I shall no more abuse this secret, than the president, your father. But, since you know it, why not yourself reveal it to M. de Lostanges?'

'He would not believe me, sir; the resistance which, until this day, I have opposed to his wishes, would lead him to look upon this disclosure as a calumny. And while I think of this, I might say that this charge would have no more weight when coming from your lips than from mine; for there is no one but the Duke de Nevres who can know—with such certainty, at least, as to convince my father of the truth on this subject, of the relations of M. Barati with the Princess of Puzzano.'

The effect which this name produced upon Giacomo may be easily comprehended. Since he had left his mother, he was ignorant of any new connections which she might have formed, whether with Barati or with the Duke de Nevres; and he now found himself thrown into the midst of an intrigue, which at first seemed to be in no way connected with him.

'The Princess of Puzzano,' he replied, warmly, 'has interests in common with this Barati, and doubtless with the Duke de Nevres also! Well, then, my child, whether you tell me more or not, I promise I will clog the wheels of master Barati's project; what you have told me suffices, for I shall go at once to the Princess of Puzzano's.'

'You do not know, then, that she left Toulouse yesterday?'

'Left Toulouse!' cried Giacomo, in a tone of dismay, so unaffected, that Armande felt assured that the man who spoke this must know the princess, and was unfeignedly surprised and alarmed at this departure, of which he was ignorant.

'Yes, sir,' replied Armande; 'and a new residence, more distant and more solitary, has been assigned to her; the town of Mirepoix has been allotted to her as a refuge, under the penalty of exile, if she leaves it for a single day.'

'And this Barati has had a hand in this persecution?' said Giacomo, in a gloomy tone 'I swear it—he shall repent of it!'

'Oh, no, sir! on the contrary, he was the princess's friend; he was concerned in the intrigues which she plotted at Toulouse, the proofs of which are in the hands of the Duke de Nevres.'

It was now Giacomo's turn to be silent.

'*Diable*,' he said to himself, 'if this Barati is a friend of my friends, I do not well see why I should set myself against him.'

Still his curiosity increased with every moment, and he resumed:

'But what intrigues could the Princess of Puzzano, a poor, lone woman, plot against the faith and against the state—and intrigues in which this M. Barati is implicated?'

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'It is not for me to tell you.'

'But I must know them!' cried Giacomo, with such violence, that Armande was terrified.

She started backward, and uttered a cry.

'Do not be alarmed, my child,' cried Giacomo, in a softer tone; 'chance, in which, a moment since, I begged you to confide, has so ordered it, that I am perhaps as deeply interested as yourself, in knowing the secret of these intrigues—ha! the Princess of Puzzano has been exiled! *Pardieu*, I will know with whom this new persecution has originated, and the culprit shall rue it, I promise you.'

'You terrify me, sir,' said Armande. 'I would not endanger the safety of any one; and if you are a friend to the princess, as your anger seems to prove, forget not that I have refused to tell you her secret, in order not to compromise her.'

Armande hesitated, and after a moment's silence, replied, with great anxiety:

'I cannot, sir! I cannot!'

'As you will; but I shall learn it then from Barati, whom I shall visit on the instant.'

Giacomo turned to leave the garden, but Armande detained him, and said:

'Master Barati, sir—I am certain of it—Master Barati will accuse persons who are perfectly innocent. Do not go to him.'

'In that case, you must yourself tell me the truth, for, I repeat it, I must know it.'

'Well, then, promise me that you will not avail yourself of it to injure my father, and I will tell you—'

'Oh!' cried Giacomo, 'I begin to comprehend you. Is your father by chance one of those who have persecuted the Princess of Puzzano?'

'My father,' replied Armand, 'fulfils his duties strictly, but he is incapable of persecution.'

'It is well,' cried Giacomo, 'we shall learn to appreciate his forbearance. And M. Barati—what has he done in all this?'

'Well, then, sir, since it is necessary to tell you of all, he has abused the confidence of my father—who revealed to him the measures he was about to take—to seize, in the house of the princess, the proofs of the existence of her son—a wretch who has been guilty of every crime. Barati warned the princess of it, and every search was ineffectual.'

'But this Barati seems to be a very gallant man,' said Giacomo, laughing; 'and were I in your place, I should be delighted to espouse him.'

'Oh, sir, if it were generosity on his part, I should understand it; but it was not to save an exiled woman that he did this—it was to—'

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At this moment a voice was heard calling Mademoiselle de Lostanges, who said hurriedly to Giacomo:

'Ah, sir, if you cannot protect me, at least do not use what I have told you to the injury of any one.'

'I will use it only to keep my promise,' said Giacomo; 'I swear to you, you shall not espouse Master Barati; I will see to it. But tell me where he lives.'

Armande gave the unknown the advocate's address, and disappeared down the garden, while Giacomo left it, and turned his steps towards the dwelling of the young advocate.

CHAPTER XX.

A QUARTER of an hour after the interview described in the preceding chapter, Giacomo knocked at Barati's door. The hour was untimely, and it was long before the door was opened; the domestic who appeared would have turned away the importunate visitor; but Giacomo thrust him aside quickly, entered the house, and directed the servant, in a voice loud enough to be heard by Barati, to tell his master that a muleteer of the mountain, who had passed through Mirepoix, desired to see him instantly. In this way our adventurer wished to assure himself of the truth of what Armande had told him; and he could not doubt it, when he heard the voice of Barati exclaim, eagerly:

'Show him up! show him up!'

Giacomo entered Barati's cabinet; the advocate was at this time about twenty-five years of age; his face was marked with care and thought, but every feature bore the impress of singular energy; and his form was carved in proportions, which denoted an unusual share of physical strength and activity.

Near him was seated a man, perhaps one or two years older than Barati, of lofty stature, and bearing in his port, and in his visage, a consciousness of merit at variance with the general expression of his features. There was more insolence indeed than intelligence in his handsome, but gross and massive countenance; and Giacomo, suspecting that it was the Duke de Nevres, called to mind the imputation which he had just heard cast upon the legitimacy of his birth, an imputation which had been the subject of a disgraceful trial—an imputation with which our readers may remember that D'Auterive had reproached the duke, when speaking of his birth.

'You call out rather loudly, my friend,' said Barati to the muleteer, 'this is not the way to enter an honest dwelling.'

'Is the dwelling honest, in the first place?' said Giacomo, 'that is the question.'

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'Ha!' cried Barati.

'And if it were so, was I wrong to call out so loudly, when it was the only means to obtain admission?'

'The knave has wit,' said the duke, laughing.

Giacomo, who, but a moment since, had heard himself described as a wretch by Armande, and without being moved by this indignity when it came from the lips of a young girl, who believed the horrors which she had heard recounted of the Prince Puzzano, Giacomo, we say, felt irritated at the tone in which the Duke de Nevres spoke of him, although there was nothing strange in it, when uttered by a nobleman in reference to a muleteer.

'Yes, in truth,' replied Giacomo, 'I have wit; it is a family heritage, and this heritage has been transmitted to me inviolate.'

The Duke de Nevres did not care to understand this allusion, but Barati who was irritated at the unceremonious tone with which the muleteer had accosted him, gave force to the hint by a smile and a glance, the meaning of which could not be mistaken, and the duke exclaimed angrily:

'What means the knave?'

'Less violence, my lord duke,' said Giacomo, 'I fear neither great names nor great airs, nor great swords. I have serious affairs to discuss with you, and calmness is necessary for us both. Master Barati, arrange it so that no one can overhear us.'

Barati, persuaded that an emissary of the Princess Puzzano stood before him, carefully closed the doors, and said to Giacomo:

'What news do you bring?'

'Very important news, master; news of the arrival of Giacomo Spaffa, Prince of Puzzano.

Barati changed colour, and cast a glance of embarrassment at the duke.

'I know,' said Giacomo, who divined the motive of the advocate's fears, 'I know that the Duke de Nevres is ill disposed toward the family of Puzzano, since he has promised Mademoiselle Armande de Lestanges to break off your marriage with her, by revealing to her father that you had admonished the princess to remove the proofs of her son Giacomo's existence, but I know, also, master, that you possess a letter which can impose silence on the duke, whenever you please to use it, and I cannot suppose that you have been so imprudent as to restore it to him, although it is for that purpose that he is here.'

At these words the duke and Barati gazed at each other as if stupified, and the latter replied hurriedly:—

'Who has told you that? Whence know you—

'That shall be explained to you in due time and place,'

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said Giacomo, 'but before we go farther, answer me. What are these suspicions of the parliament relative to Giacomo's existence, and what measures should the princess adopt for her son's safety?'

The tone and language of this man was well calculated to produce the impression that he was intimately acquainted with the relations of the Princess of Puzzano with Barati. Still the latter hesitated to answer in the duke's presence, but Giacomo, who divined the motive of his embarrassment added:

'If the Duke de Nevres is not one of ours, it is merely because he has not carefully reflected upon his interest: I engage to prove it to him in a moment. Speak in his presence then, speak without fear.'

'In truth,' replied the advocate, 'there is but little to be said after that which you have just told the duke yourself. Information has been given that the Prince Giacomo of Puzzano is still in existence; his arrest has been demanded of the parliament; parliament has engaged to give him up, and it was expected that a clue might be traced to his movements by seizing the princess's papers.'

'I know all that,' said Giacomo, who for the last few moments had been scrutinizing a rich casket which stood upon the desk of the advocate. 'After having been informed of this design by M. de Lostanges, you gave the princess timely warning, and for that service she has richly rewarded you.'

'How,' cried Barati, 'Compassion alone—

'And this casket, which was not placed empty in your hands. It was that which determined you.'

'This casket,' said the advocate, turning pale.

'I know more about it than you, more even than the princess,' said Giacomo, taking it into his hands; 'your portion was here,' he continued, as he opened it, while the duke and the advocate gazed at him with astonishment. 'That of monseigneur was here,' he added, raising the false bottom with the point of his poignard, and drawing from the casket a magnificent necklace of diamonds, which he presented to the Duke de Nevers. 'The princess has charged me to place it in his hands, as a testimonial of her thanks for the silence which he will observe concerning this affair.'

As we have said, Giacomo's great art was, with wonderful quickness and presence of mind, to draw advantage from the slightest circumstances which offered themselves. The sight of this casket, which he had given to his mother, and with the secret with which he alone was acquainted, had explained the words of Armande, when she said that it was not from generosity that Barati had saved the Princess of Puzzano. Still the manner in which Giacomo assailed the probity of the duke might have been hazardous, if he had not previously

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overwhelmed him as well as Barati with astonishment, by revealing what he knew of their secrets, and in such a way as to lead them to believe that he was still more accurately acquainted with them. Giacomo had no sooner observed the eager glance which M. de Nevres cast upon the necklace, than he formed a correct estimate of the man with whom he was dealing. Whatever refusals, whatever grimaces the duke's pride might oppose to him, he was sure that he had touched the weak spot in his character, and he continued:

'And now, master Barati, let us hear no more of the past, with which I am acquainted as well as you; let us speak of the present. What does the Parliament know concerning the Prince of Puzzano?'

'Why, it seems,' said Barati, who spoke like a man in the presence of a supernatural being, 'it seems that they are informed of the expected arrival of the prince.'

'I have just told you that he has already arrived.'

'Has he brought his crew with him?'

'You interrogate, master Barati, and you do not answer.'

Barati cast another glance at the duke.

'But the duke is one of our friends, I say,' replied Giacomo, 'for if he does not find the chain which binds him to us of sufficient strength, it can at least be lengthened by a few rows of pearls of the purest lustre.'

'Sir!' cried the duke.

'The galleon which the Prince of Puzzano captured off the Canaries, contained an admirable store of them,' said Giacomo.

The word galleon was applied at that time to a vessel laden with gold, and this remark opened a vast field to the hopes of a man, whose silence it was necessary to purchase. The effect of this word was so powerful that the duke repeated it and said:

'A galleon! he has seized a galleon!'

This exclamation of delight and surprise was accompanied by a mechanical gesture with which the duke thrust the necklace into his pocket. Giacomo observed it and resumed:

'Have no anxiety, master Barati, as to what the prince has done with his crew; he has placed them in safety, but that which I wish to know is this.—What information has reached the ears of parliament concerning certain intrigues against the State and the catholic religion, and in which—'

This point was the point upon which Giacomo wished to be enlightened, and upon which he could not avow his ignorance, having assumed the air of a man so accurately informed of the princess' secrets. Barati replied:—

'Why, you well know how matters stand. Although an exile, the princess of Puzzano is allied to families which cannot be assailed without fair pretext. They have taken advantage of some visits made to the princess by a petty seigneur of

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the mountain, a certain Baron de la Roque, who is suspected of being closely connected with the protestants of the Cevennes, who are disposed, it is said, to profit by the misunderstanding which has occurred between the king and the pope, concerning the declaration of the French clergy to raise their heads again. Hence the princess has been accused of participating in their project of revolt; but there is no truth in it. You know that.'

'It matters not,' said Giacomo, 'in affairs of religion one cannot take too many precautions, and it was imprudent in the princess to receive the visits of the Baron de la Roque.'

'The business is ended, entirely ended,' said Barati. 'The baron has returned to his castle. But I am of your opinion; I think that the princess will do well to avoid all communication with him, now that they dwell at some distance from each other. But there is one point upon which she should be upon her guard; you know that the prince, who was condemned for having devoted himself to the occult sciences, kept a laboratory in his mother's house.'

'We are now in France,' said Giacomo, 'and the royal decree, abolishes all accusations against sorcery, so that this accusation cannot be interpreted as a crime.'

'Without doubt,' said Barati, 'but the existence of a chemical laboratory would be none the less dangerous on that account.'

Giacomo did not comprehend him, but he hesitated to question him more closely, when the duke, desirous to display his wit, interrupted them:

'Master Barati is right,' he said, 'the king has just established a *chambre ardente* to discover and prosecute the band of poisoners, who now invest France, and the gentlemen of the robe are too eager to gain their fees not to see a manufactory of poison, wherever they meet with an alembic or a crucible.'

These words produced a strange effect upon Giacomo; they recalled to his mind the calumny of which he had been the object—a calumny which accused him of having hastened his father's decease, and he muttered in a stifled voice:

'Oh! everywhere the same blind and ferocious justice! It matters not,' he resumed, 'the Princess of Puzzano will take care not to subject herself to such a suspicion.'

He was then silent. Barati, who had divined that this man was more than he appeared to be, now turned to him, and said:

'Is this all that you wish to know?'

These words reminded Giacomo of the promise which he had given to Armande, and he felt somewhat embarrassed how to keep it; but Barati's question required an answer.

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Impelled by that spirit of adventure, which took delight in the most complicated intrigues, the prince replied :

'It is indeed all that I wished to know, sir ; but it is not all that I wished to say to you. You are desirous of espousing Mademoiselle de Lostanges, are you not ?"

'That is a matter known to all the world.'

'But it is known also to all the world that she is greatly averse to this marriage.'

'Maiden's caprice !' said Barati, peevishly.

'A caprice which has not hesitated to apply to the Duke de Nevres, to break off this projected union.'

'A union which I oppose no longer,' said M. de Nevres.

'But one that another opposes,' rejoined Giacomo.

'And this other ?' inquired Barati.

Giacomo's visage assumed a singular expression of joyous irony as he replied :

'This other is a gentleman of passably good mien, sir—a gentleman who handles his sword indifferently well, and who is infinitely interested in the beautiful demoiselle de Lostanges.'

'I know him,' said Barati.

'I doubt it,' rejoined Giacomo.

'It would be strange,' said the duke, 'if M. Barati did not know him, since they have had an encounter together, and the poor fellow is, in consequence of it, lying in his bed at this very moment.'

'But there is another,' said Giacomo, laughing.

'Another!' repeated the advocate.

'Another, Master Barati,' said Giacomo, 'who has charged me to tell you that if you present yourself to-morrow at the hotel of M. De Lostanges to sign the contract, you may indeed leave it for the church ; but in that case there will not be a marriage service rehearsed there, but a mass for the dead.'

'You can bear back for answer to him who has charged you with such a message,' said Barati, in a firm tone, 'that I shall repair to-morrow to the hotel of the president, and that I will remain for an hour before his door, in order to await the man who may feel disposed to speak with me.'

'Sir advocate,' said Giacomo, 'if he to whom I refer were inclined to honour you so far as to measure swords with you, he would not have directed me to warn you, he would have come himself in person ; but he has other means to rid himself of a rival.'

'Assassination, perhaps !' cried Barati.

'He is not the man to stick at it,' said Giacomo, 'if you compel him ; but he thinks that you will be so accommodating as to listen to the reasons which he has directed me to repeat to you.'

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'Sir, I neither can nor will listen to anything on this subject,' said Barati. 'I love Mademoiselle de Lostanges; I have her father's promise, and she shall be mine, or I will perish.'

Giacomo smiled at the resolution displayed by Barati, and he replied gaily:

'Well, then, Master Barati, since you push things to this pass, and are ready to brave death sooner than renounce your bride, you shall receive no personal injury; I promise this, and still you shall not espouse the fair demoiselle.'

'We shall see.'

'Oh! all is arranged,' said Giacomo. 'I observe with pleasure, that there are no means to terrify you; you will compel us to force you.'

'I despise your menaces,' said Barati.

'Very well, master advocate,' replied Giacomo, 'the man who sets the price upon his services, which you set upon yours, should confine his scorn to himself. Reflect upon my words; a promise has been given to Mademoiselle de Lostanges that this marriage shall be broken off, and if by day-break to morrow a letter from you has not dissolved it, you will see that promise fulfilled in your presence. As to you, M. de Nevres, I have a few words to say to you in private. Will you have the goodness to follow me?'

The duke readily complied, and accompanied by Giacomo, left the dwelling of the advocate. The latter was stupified at what had occurred, but firmly resolved to brave the threats that had been uttered against him.

Scarcely were Giacomo and the duke alone, when our adventurer, with that spirit of audacity which characterized him, said:

'You have not surmised who I am, M. de Nevres.

'In truth,' replied the latter, 'unless you are the Prince of Puzzano himself, I do not see who you can be.'

'Duke de Nevres,' rejoined Giacomo, 'you have hit the mark, and I am delighted to find that you have understood me better than yonder gownsman; I have hopes now that we can come to an agreement on every point.'

The duke hesitated to reply, and the prince continued:

'You have seen my mother, have you not? you are acquainted with my sister?'

'Yes, in truth,' said the duke, with a warmth which proved that the subject was by no means indifferent to him.

'You bear a noble name,' said Giacomo, 'but to this name there is a splendour wanting which you are unable to give to it. A marriage with a rich heiress could invest it with this splendour. Leonore is beautiful.'

'Without doubt,' said the duke, 'and if I had listened to my heart alone—'

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'She is wealthy,' interrupted Giacomo, 'and her wealth consists in a fortune which should please you better than any other; for it will not be necessary to render an account of it, because it is impossible to invest it in her own name.' For if this were done, inquiries might be made as to the means by which it has been acquired, and it might be difficult to give the requisite information.

'I comprehend you,' said the duke, 'and it would be—'

'Two millions shall be placed in your hands on the day when the contract is signed, and you will merely settle upon my sister a dowry of a hundred thousand crowns. Does the affair suit you?'

'Admirably.'

'Well, then, be at Mirepoix to-morrow evening; I cannot accompany you thither, for in the morning I must keep my word with Barati.'

'You are resolved to prevent this marriage, then?'

'I have promised Mademoiselle de Lostanges to do so.'

'How did you become acquainted with her?'

'That is my secret. To-morrow, then, at Mirepoix.'

'To-morrow evening.'

'One word more. Is this Armande beautiful?'

'Very beautiful; but since you have given her this promise, you must know her.'

'I have never seen her.'

'You jest.'

'Do you forget that I have dealings with supernatural beings?' said Giacomo, laughing.

'That troubles me but little,' said the duke, 'but do not forget that suspicions are aroused concerning you, and that you are very imprudent to meddle with an affair, which is entirely indifferent to you.'

'That is the charm of it,' said Giacomo. 'And then—you have told me that this Armande is beautiful. Adieu until to-morrow!'

With these words Giacomo departed, and entered a house in which, at a later period the events occurred which we have already related.

On the following day the young advocate sallied forth in his gayest attire, accompanied by a domestic, upon whose fidelity he could depend. He wore concealed beneath his dress a long poignard, and had confirmed himself in his determination to repel force by force. As he walked from his own dwelling to that of the President de Lostanges, he proceeded onward with watchful eye, scrutinizing the mein, the gait, the gesture, and even the expression of the countenance of those who passed near him.

Still he met nothing to excite his suspicions that the menaces which he had heard on the preceding evening would

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be put in execution, at least by any violent means. When he reached the hotel of M. de Lostanges, however, he perceived, seated upon one of the benches, which stood on either side of the gate, a man, who rose when he beheld him, and bowed to him with a singular expression of sarcasm.

This individual was the innkeeper Vergnes, who was at that time young, but who, even then, opened his house to the gay suppers of the students of the University, and to the wild revels of the officers. Like all his fellow-students, Barati had been an occasional visitor at this house, and it was not surprising that Vergnes should smile at meeting one of his old acquaintances, as he gravely entered the abode of his affianced bride to sign his marriage contract.

Notwithstanding this, however, Barati was so alarmed at this encounter, that he paused upon the threshold of the door, and followed the innkeeper with his eyes, as the latter hurried onward with rapidity. His fears rose to such a pitch that he despatched his domestic in pursuit of the man, and entered the hotel de Lostanges alone.

With all the apparent and oftentimes real strictness which characterized the morals of the magistrates at this epoch, yet no father, in marrying his daughter to a young man of twenty-five, imagined that he was bestowing her upon a youth who could not be reproached with some slight follies. But follies, which a father knows in his own heart, yet of which he feigns to be ignorant, and which he readily pardons, may become an insurmountable obstacle if they are brought forward in a way to give rise to scandal, and above all, if they are cast as a reproach upon the bridegroom in the presence of a bride, who would gladly grasp at an opportunity of branding as an unpardonable crime, that which the sex is usually ready to forgive, namely, a few past gallantries.

While he slowly ascended the steps of the hotel, Barati, disturbed in spite of himself by the presence of Vergnes, recalled to mind all the follies of which he could be accused; he racked his brain to recall, if, by any chance, he had left in the hands of this man the unsettled account of some jovial night, and sure of having placed his affairs in perfect order on this score, he was vexed at himself for this strange and unaccountable alarm.

When he entered the saloon of his father-in-law, the latter, his wife, his daughter, and a few friends, were already awaiting him. The reception which he met with from M. de Lostanges was most cordial. Barati seemed sure of success. Madame de Lostanges appeared embarrassed, but Armande received him with an air of triumph. Her glance, her smile was fraught with an ease, a carelessness which recalled his fears again.

But he was one of those men whose courage and obstinacy

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increase in the face of danger; he cast a rapid glance around him, and seeing none but familiar faces, he felt convinced that the danger had not yet appeared, although Armande had doubtless been warned that some one would come to her assistance.

After the usual compliments and congratulations, Barati took from beneath his habit a portfolio of considerable size, and reaching it carelessly to the notary, he said:

'I beg you to ascertain the sum which is contained in this portfolio, and which constitutes my *apport* in this contract. You will find therein two hundred and twenty thousand livres which are to be at once converted into specie. The two hundred thousand livres will be specified in the contract. As to the remaining twenty thousand, I offer them as a gift of love to Mademoiselle de Lostanges, to use at her discretion for her attire and her pleasures.'

Barati had counted upon the effect of this princely liberality and it was well suited to the age. He was not deceived in his expectation. All present cried out in admiration; Madame de Lostanges cast a glance upon her daughter, as if to say:

'My child, there are few husbands like this, mark me!'

Armande herself was greatly embarrassed; she glanced stealthily at Barati, and said to herself that, except for that horrible black habit which she detested, he was quite tolerable, and that with such a husband, a woman would be envied, at least, even if she were not happy.

The notary now began to read the marriage contract.

The terms in which it was drawn up, accounted for the preference which M. de Lostanges evinced for Barati, and for the firmness which he had displayed in bringing about the accomplishment of this union. As the clauses of this contract explain, and perhaps justify some events which we are about to recount, we request the reader's permission to repeat the principal ones; firstly, and to account for the interest which M. de Lostanges displayed in this marriage, the dowry which he allotted to his daughter was but fifteen thousand livres, while Barati's *apport* was two hundred thousand; secondly, the *apport* of Barati fell to his wife in case of his decease, even if there were children; and this *apport* fell to her as her own property, that is to say, her rights took precedence of those of the children, if there should be any, and all claims on the part of Barati's family were entirely excluded. Thus much concerning the interests of the family of Lostanges. As to those of Barati, they consisted in a full and complete donation of the property of M. de Lostanges to his daughter, but only in case of the existence of children born from the marriage of Barati and Armande. In case there were no children, Armande had merely a life interest

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in this property, and at her death, it reverted to the president's nephews.

The rehearsal of this contract had already lasted for more than an hour, and still nothing announced the slightest probability of interruption. Barati took courage, and it was now Armande's turn to be agitated; that she was so, was evident from the frequent glances which she directed towards the clock which stood in a corner of the saloon. It seemed to her as if the notary devoured the pages of the contract, while Barati could scarcely refrain from bidding him quicken his slow and monotonous utterance.

The reading was at last ended, however, and nothing now remained but for the parties to affix their signatures to the their signatures to the contract. As usually happens after a prolonged sitting, all present rose, and went one by one to pay the unmeaning compliments which are expected on such occasions. Armande's eyes were fastened upon the door: she seemed to invoke the unknown rescuer, whom she expected, but who still delayed to appear.

The pen was presented to M. de Lostanges and his wife; they both signed their names; it was then passed to Barati, who affixed his signature, and at last the turn came to Mademoiselle de Lostanges. All present gazed upon her, for her aversion to this marriage was well known. She took the pen, and casting a despairing glance around the apartment, advanced trembling towards the table, but at the moment when she had reached it, she paused, with her eyes fixed steadfastly before her.

'Sign it, my daughter, sign it!' said her father, sternly.

Armande, confused, could only answer:—

'What?'

'The contract! this!' said M. de Lostanges.

But he himself stood confounded at seeing a large blank sheet of paper upon the table. The contract had disappeared!

The occurrence seemed almost supernatural. There was no one in the saloon, except the family of Lostanges, three or four friends, the notary, his clerk and Barati. The effect may easily be imagined which this singular disappearance produced upon all the actors in this scene, but particularly upon the bridegroom, who thought every danger had passed by, and upon Amande, who at last had despaired of aid.

The first movement of each one present, was to look under the table, to the right hand and the left, the second was to gaze in the faces of those around, though no one ventured to say to the other:

'Did you remove the contract?'

'It is a silly trick!' cried Barati, pale with anger, 'and as some one present must have practised it, I beg him not to continue it so long as to compel me to look upon it as an insult.'

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A universal cry of 'M. Barati is right! who has taken the contract?' only increased the general embarrassment, for it was an excuse for all. The notary now began to feel uneasy, and turning to his clerk, he said:

'Your eyes have not left the table; they ought not to have left it! who is it that has taken the contract? Speak out at once, for I cannot think that you have been guilty of such an act of audacity.'

The clerk swore that he was perfectly innocent.

'Besides,' he added. 'I have not left the saloon, you can search me, if you please, for I cannot have swallowed it.'

Barati was too familiar with the airs of culprits, not to suspect the young man from his very defence. The offer of submitting to be searched is a common trick of robbers, after they have once conveyed their stolen goods to a place of safety. He passed quickly behind the clerk, and opened a small door which was concealed by a piece of tapestry, and was situated directly behind the table at which the notary was seated. He stooped hastily, and picked up a loose sheet upon which the notary had taken notes, and which had been left in the contract, and must have been dropped at the moment when the latter had been removed; he pointed it out to all present, exclaiming:

'That is the spot through which the contract has passed!'

'And this is the spot where it re-enters,' answered the voice of a man, who had opened the opposite door of the saloon, so gently as to be unheard amid the general disturbance.

Every eye was turned towards him, and they beheld a man of lofty stature and imposing features, standing in a proud attitude before them. He was richly clad, in Spanish costume, which was covered with embroidery, and embellished with diamond buttons, a silken net confined his long black hair, and a poignard of rare splendour shone at his girdle. In addition to this, he wore a rapier, a weapon somewhat out of fashion, but the richness of which well accorded with the peculiar elegance of his attire. Armande gazed upon him with a delight which was soon changed to timid admiration at the singular beauty of this bold intruder. All present were stupified, when they beheld this man, who announced himself with such audacity, holding in his hand the contract which had so strangely disappeared.

Barati turned pale, and his face assumed an expression of fury, as he recognised in the untimely intruder the muleteer of the preceding evening.

But the scene which followed deserves a separate chapter.

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CHAPTER XXI.

The appearance of the muleteer inspired Barati with so much the greater alarm, as it was impossible for the young advocate to know how far this man was acquainted with the secrets of his life. Besides, from the little which he had already revealed to him, from the singular freedom with which he had spoken on the preceeding evening, Barati had reason to fear that he might disclose his connection with the Princess of Puzzano, for it was evident that he was a man to hesitate at nothing.

At this moment Barati felt a keen sensation of regret that he had not yielded to the menaces which had been uttered in his house, but at the next, the obstinacy of his character gained the ascendant, and he resolved, since the contest was once commenced, to sustain it to the end.

The President de Lostanges, equally surprised, had been more highly irritated than any one present, at the entrance of this stranger into an assemblage so private, and but for the astonishment which held him breathless at the sight of the missing contract in the hands of the unknown, it is probable that the latter would not wish for M. de Lostanges and his daughter to understand it, but it was like a ray of light to Barati, and he felt assured that the man who thus announced himself, could be no other than the Prince of Puzzano. His first impulse was a desire of vengeance, and he was upon the point of proclaiming aloud the name of the proscribed man, but notwithstanding his fury, Barati paused at the sarcastic glance with which Giacomo seemed to challenge his hostility; he could not imagine that this man would have thrown himself thus imprudently into a danger so imminent, without having secured the means of escape, and, above all to take the precautions which secured him a prolonged hearing.

In truth, no sooner had he crossed the threshold, than he carefully closed the door behind him, drew to the bolts, so that it could not be opened from without, and with folded arms, leaned his back against it, waiting for some one to address him.

'Who are you, and what would you?' said the president.

'I am he whom you seek,' replied Giacomo, 'he whom your daughter expects, and he, whom master Barati will regret having endeavoured to save.'

'This tells me neither who you are,' said M. de Lostanges, 'nor by what right you enter my house thus rudely.'

'It rested solely with M. Barati, to prevent my entrance here; he had only to remain away himself.'

'Master Barati would have failed in all the duties of a man of honour, had he remained away,' replied the president.

'He has failed in all the duties of a man of prudence, and

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of an advocate devoted to—those who pay him well by coming here.'

'I do not know this man!' exclaimed Barati.

'But who are you?' rejoined the president, 'we have heard enough of insolence, and should I call my servants—'

'Your servants will not answer your summon,' said Giacomo, drawing his rapier, and you will have the kindness to listen to me patiently. 'Reassure yourself, madam,' he added, addressing Madame de Lostanges, 'and you, likewise, my beautiful demoiselle, more beautiful than I could have believed you to be. I have no desire to employ violence here; but since master Barati has thought fit to slight the counsel which was given him yesterday, and has left his dwelling, it has been necessary for me to come and consult him there, concerning an affair which greatly interests him.'

'This is not the proper moment, sir,' said Barati, 'and—'

'You know better than any one else,' replied Giacomo, interrupting him, 'that I cannot dispose of my time as you can, and for an advocate, who should set store by a client, who recompenses him so liberally, you should have shown more complaisance than you have done.'

'Enough, sir,' cried Barati. 'If M. de Lostanges will permit me, I am at your service. Restore that contract; Mademoiselle de Lostanges is about to sign it, that done, I will refuse you neither my time nor my counsels.'

The tone in which Barati pronounced these words had an accent of provocation in them which showed with sufficient clearness in what sense they were to be understood by him to whom they were addressed; but Giacomo laughed, and replied:

'It is this very contract marriage, master Barati, and if you had designed to wait for me this morning, I would have told you wherefore. But since you have not thought fit to do so, I will explain myself. Do not grow impatient M. de Lostanges, my explanation will not be very long, and perhaps you, in your return, will thank me for the interruption which I have been obliged to occasion to this ceremony.'

'Speak! speak, then!' rejoined M. de Lostanges.

It is probable that the president would not long have endured the presence of this intruder, and that, at all risks, he would have summoned his domestics; but Barati's paleness, the agitation that was visible beneath the air of menace with which he gazed upon the unknown, the delight of his daughter; all seemed to prove that this intervention was prompted by a motive, which his honour as a father rendered it his duty to learn.

'I thank you, M. de Lostanges,' said Giocomo, 'the affair is pressing; you shall judge to what extent, and I will wager that M. de Barati will comprehend still more clearly than

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yourself, that it is his interest as well as his duty to assist me in arranging matters this very day. He will comprehend also why this contract, which has been drawn up so admirably, is the very one which we need in the other affair to which I refer.'

'You refer then to a marriage?' said M. de Lostanges.

'Yes, in truth,' said Giacomo, gazing at Barati with so significant an expression that the suspicion flashed across the minds of all present that the advocate was entangled by some secret ties, 'yes, in truth, and I hope that master Barati will understand how necessary the present contract is to us, for the names need only to be changed, and the position of the parties reversed.'

These ambiguous words excited general astonishment. Barati like the rest, pondered upon their true meaning with the most anxious curiosity. The air of meaning with which Giacomo uttered these words seemed to convey a hint that was by no means unwelcome to him.

'Explain yourself,' said Barati.

'The case stands thus. There is a young maiden of high birth, who, during the absence of her brother has received the visits of a young man. Although these visits have occurred in the presence of her mother, yet her brother, who has returned only within the last two days, does not look upon them with such indifference; in his eyes they appear calculated to injure the good name of his sister, and he insists upon their marriage.'

Barati gazed with open eyes on the speaker; all present regarded him with astonishment, but M. de Lostanges replied with some warmth:—

'Even if all this be true, I do not see how this contract can be useful to you.'

'Have I not said,' replied Giacomo, with an air of irony, 'that it would suffice to change the names, and reverse the position of the parties.'

'But to what position do you refer,' cried Barati.'

'In the contract required between the young maiden and the young man in question, it is not the bridegroom who possesses some hundred thousand livres, it is the bride who possesses millions; but by a strange concurrence of circumstances the husband is to be benefitted at the expense of his wife, as Mademoiselle de Lostanges is benefitted in this contract at the expense of master Barati. A better model for such a contract cannot be found, since the notary of the village where the ceremony is to take place is far from being as skilful as those of Toulouse, and it is for this reason that I have come to obtain it.'

During the last few moments the possibility of a marriage between himself and Mademoiselle Lenore of Puzzano, had presented itself vaguely to Barati's mind. Had he not visited

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her in the absence of her brother? might not the young girl have become enamoured of him, and have declared her passion when she saw the object of it about to escape her by a marriage with another? In addition to this, was she not compelled to place in the hands of her husband an immense fortune, the origin of which could not be explained, (for the mention of the galleon returned incessantly to Barati's mind,) did not all this designate Mademoiselle Lenore of Puzzano as the young girl in question; and did not the opposition which the Unknown offered to his marrige with Mademoiselle de Lostanges, point him out as the man for whom this illustrious and magnificent alliance was reserved?

At that moment Lenore's millions, necklaces of diamonds, and the galleon danced before Barati's eyes, like so many dazzling phantoms; he cast a wandering glance around the apartment, while all present gazed with astonishment at the expression of indecision which had succeeded the air of gloomy resolve that shone in his features at the commencement of this scene.

Giacomo, who saw that he was half vanquished, continued in the same ironic tone in which he had hitherto spoken:

'We cannot dispense with master Barati,' he said, 'in drawing up a deed so important, and I have come hither to beg him to accompany me. A dowry of two millions in favour of the bridegroom, should not be bestowed without due precautions. M. Barati's presence is absolutely necessary.'

'What have you to answer, sir?' cried M. de Lostanges, indignant at the advocate's silence.

'In truth,' replied Barati, stammering, 'I did not know—I could not foresee—'

An appeal to the advocate's honour and probity would still, perhaps, have restrained him; but the president's indignation decided the step to which the fascination of these dazzling hopes so violently impelled him.

'Enough, sir, enough!' cried M. de Lostanges. 'Go, and fulfill your contract with some lost creature whom you have beguiled and abandoned, and to whom you return for the sake of gold. Leave my house! leave it!'

Barati, thus addressed, raised his eyes at this insult, and replied:

'The maiden of whom you speak is worthy the respect of the universe.'

'Come then!' said Giacomo, hurrying him out of the apartment. Before those present had recovered from their confusion, they had both left the house.

Giacomo cast a glance of triumph on Armande as he departed, and he observed that she wore an air of discontent; in truth she found herself abandoned with extreme facility, and if one could have read the secrets of her heart, it would have

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been seen that Barati, chosen and perferred by a rival like the one described, no longer seemed so disagreeable to her; then the man whom she refused appeared to gain by the exchange, and it is always vexatious when those we reject find a better bargain than that of which we have deprived them. All this so greatly abated the joy of Mademoiselle de Lostanges that she was perfectly sincere in the indignation which she manifested at Barati's conduct and tears which she shed at the humilation thus inflicted upon her.

In the meanwhile Barati followed Giacomo like a man in a dream, whose steps are no longer guided by his reason.

When they reached the outer gate, he found a horse standing there, already saddled and bridled.

'And now,' said our adventurer, to Mirepoix! 'we must be there this evening.'

The mention of the place where the Princess of Puzzano resided, served to confirm Barati in the strange hope that he had conceived; still, however, he detained the unknown, who had exercised such a singular power over him, and exclaimed:

'But who are you, then?'

'Giacomo Spaffa, Prince of Puzzano,' replied the latter.

Barati gazed upon him for a moment in alarm; everything seemed at once clear to him, and he said:

'Do you not accompany me?'

'I shall be at my mother's when you arrive there, but I have some affairs yet to arrange.'

Barati mounted his horse, and spurred up the road to Mirepoix; but no sooner had he left him, than Giacomo burst into a fit of laughter, and cried:

'The jest is a good one, but the devil seize me if I feel the courage to prolong it during a ride of eight leagues; we will bring it to an end this evening.'

He still stood before the door of the hotel de Lostanges, and turning towards the window, he muttered:

'Yon maiden is as beautiful as an angel; I must see her again this very day.'

Having taken this resolution, he wrapped himself in the long Spanish mantle that hung across his shoulders, and proceeded towards the deserted street which bordered the garden of M. de Lostanges. The gate was locked.

'*Diable*,' he said to himself, 'the service which I have rendered this young girl deserves some thanks, and if she had the least wit, she would have guessed that I would return hither.'

He had scarcely spoken these works, when he heard a slight cough behind the gate. Giacomo took off his hat in silence, raised his eyes to heaven, and uttered these words:

'Oh, woman! of whatever clime, of whatever rank, you are and you always will be that portion of humanity, which is the most crafty, and fondest of intrigue!'

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Having said this, Giacomo knocked at the gate. It was opened.

'Are you not contented with me?' he said to Armande, as he beheld her standing before him.

'Have you not kept your promise?' she replied, in a sarcastic tone.

'Not yet; for you do not think me so stupid as to bestow upon this advocate a happiness almost equal to that you have denied him?'

'What mean you?' cried Armande, in a tone of the liveliest joy.

'The day after to-morrow, at midnight, I will be at this gate, and will explain all to you.'

'But I do not know that I can come,' said Armande, blushing, 'for I do not know who you are.'

'Who I am?' said Giacomo. 'Why, a man, who, to save you from suffering, has risked his life—who will risk it again, to see you once more, were it but once.'

'You terrify me!' said Armande.

'My name, if I should tell it to you, would perhaps terrify you still more than my words.'

'But who are you? speak! that I may know if I can—'

She paused, blushed, and dropping her eyes to the ground, added:

'Who are you?'

'A man whom you can send to the scaffold, if you tell your father that he will be waiting for you the day after to-morrow.'

'Your name? for—'

'My name is Giacomo Spaffa, Prince of Puzzano.'

Armande uttered a cry, and Giacomo closed the gate.

'If she does not leap from her window,' he said, as he withdrew, 'rather than fail to keep the appointment given by the corsair, the sorcerer Puzzano—if she does not put father and mother to sleep with drugs, in order to see and hear this detestable bandit, I know naught of womankind, and will in future distrust the curiosity and weakness of them all.'

A moment after, Giacomo entered the abode of Vergnes, changed his dress, and took the road to Mirepoix.

CHAPTER XXII.

We left Barati spurring towards Mirepoix, and Giacomo following him, after having appointed a meeting with Armande for the day after the morrow; let us accompany them in their hasty journey, which was replete with interest and reflections for them both.

Giacomo, indeed, gave little thought to the object of his errand to Mirepoix; his plan had been traced out in advance:

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he had performed the most difficult part of his design, and he was on his way to complete it: but, during the interval, it scarcely entered his mind. It was the peculiar characteristic of this man to devote himself entirely to the present, and to dismiss a purpose from his thoughts, as soon as he had arranged everything that could influence its result. The subject which now occupied Giacomo's reflections was a project which he had long meditated, and which he hoped at last to be able to put in operation.

But there was still another feature in Giacomo's character, or rather in his conduct, which, in the eyes of others, might have appeared folly; at all times and places, he scattered words and gifts about him, ninety-nine out of a hundred of which were sterile, but one of which, coming opportunely to his aid, at a time more or less remote, amply repaid him for his prodigality. We will notice some which he strewed upon the road, in order to explain our meaning.

He had scarcely ridden a league from Toulouse, when his course was arrested by the despairing cries of a mendicant, who complained that he had lost his dog, and that he could no longer proceed on his way, as he was blind. He was tall in figure, still young, and one who, but for this cruel infirmity, could certainly gain his livelihood by the labour of his hands. Any other than Giacomo would have passed on without heeding his cries, or would have been content with giving him a few sous; Giacomo stopped, and having scrutinised the blind man for a moment, he called to him. The poor fellow, guided by the sound of his voice, made his way towards him as well as he was able, and Giacomo said to him:

'Listen, my friend: I have vowed a vow to St. James of Compostella—to whose shrine I made a pilgrimage to obtain the restoration of my sight—I have vowed a vow, I say, to give a gold louis to every blind man whom I might meet upon my road. Stretch out your hand, that I may fulfil this vow.'

The blind man obeyed, and Giacomo gravely placed in his hand a sous.

The mendicant's infirmity was not proof against this disappointment, and he cast the sou upon the ground, exclaiming:

'May St. James of Compostella render you blind and deaf, forsworn pilgrim, for having thus broken your vow!'

Giacomo laughed aloud, and replied:

'I have made you a finer gift, knave, than if I had given you a louis, for I have restored your sight. But listen to me carefully. If to-morrow, or any time within twenty years, a man accosts you, saying, "*To the rescue of the black cavalier*," then lend him good aid, or the infirmity which you now feign will become real, from the moment when you refuse. Never

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forget either this day or this hour; and that you may be sure to remember them, here are three bright louis.'

Never did a man in the full possession of his sight cast a glance of greater astonishment upon another, than the mendicant cast upon Giacomo. He took the three louis, while the cavalier said to him:

'What is your name?'

'François Galli.'

'Well, then, François Galli, remember well that you have this day met with a man who will make your fortune.'

Giacomo now struck the spurs into his steed, and disappeared. It may easily be imagined that such an event must remain for ever engraved upon the memory of the beggar. But how could this benefit Giacomo? He did not know; but in the adventurous life which he led, he thus established so many points of support—so many chances of refuge and safety.—And such a mode of procedure was the more likely to be useful to him, as Giacomo remembered, with strange accuracy, the words that he uttered in these encounters, the day and hour when they took place, and the features of the individual whom he accosted.

During the short journey which he took from Toulouse to Mirepoix, he profitted by every occasion which offered, whether at an inn or farm-house, to leave behind him some unexpected and mysterious token of his presence. We do not intend to recount them all: but we will mention one more, as it has some reference to this narration.

While passing along a wretched road, which led from D'Auterive to Sainte Gabelle, Giacomo encountered a group of individuals in festive attire; they were some persons of rank, followed by a crowd of peasants, all of whom seemed very joyous and mirthful. Among them was a tall and beautiful woman, holding in her arms an infant who was clad in rich swaddling clothes; it was evident that this group were going to or returning from a christening. Our adventurer drew up by the road side, so as to stand at the right hand of the little troop, and uncovered his head. One of the individuals who walked in the front of the band, paused, saluted him, and said:

'I thank you, sir, for your attention, for I see from the station which you have taken, that you know as well as we do, that it is an unlucky omen, for a child returning from a christening to encounter a man upon a black steed on the left side of the road.'

'I not only wish, sir, that this meeting may be harmless to the child,' replied Giacomo, 'but I hope it may be fortunate for him. Whose child is it, sir?'

'It is a son of M. D'Auterive, and that is his uncle and godfather, the Baron de la Roque.'

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'I do not believe in ill omens,' said the latter, stepping forward, and speaking in rather a scornful tone.

'But you will believe, perhaps, in the kind wishes of a traveller toward this child, when he pledges them in the name of his friends of the Cevennes,' replied Giacomo, with a mind always awake to the slightest word which could recall a reminiscence.

The astonishment which was visible in the features of the young baron rendered Giacomo an object of singular curiosity, which was by no means diminished by his subsequent words and actions.

He leaped from his horse, approached the nurse, and presenting her with a small golden medal, which was attached to a silken cord, he said:

'Fasten this precious relic about the neck of the child. It is one of the coins from that treasure found by Raymond at Antioch, a great number of which he deposited upon the holy sepulchre, that they might be distributed as objects of sanctity among those of his vassals who had followed him. He who wears one of them is sure of success in every enterprise he undertakes.'

All present made the sign of the cross at these words, and Giacomo, lowering his voice, so as to be heard by the nurse alone, continued:

'As to you, woman, you will teach this child, as soon as it can speak, the maxim which is written in sacred characters upon this piece of gold. This maxim is, that, '*speech is silver, but silence is gold.*' And do you also observe this precious maxim, and feel assured that on the day when the child shall hear these words pronounced, fortune will not be far distant.'

After having uttered this admonition, which he accompanied with a few lines, Giacomo departed, saying to the Baron de la Roque:

'The seventh day from this, will be a happy one for him who does not fear to visit the exiles.'

This incident, like the one previously related, was calculated to make a lively impression upon the mind, in a country, and at an epoch which were far from being destitute of superstitious notions, and when those, who, like the baron, affected to despise them, were considered as godless and irreligious.

It was in this manner that Giacomo employed his time while upon the road to Mirepoix. He had rendered his journey much shorter, by passing through Sainte Gabelle, thus avoiding Saverdun and Pamiers, which were situated upon the usual route, where he might have encountered Barati. Beside this, Giacomo did not spare the spur, and notwithstanding his delays, and the late hour at which he left Toulouse, he reached Mirepoix before the advocate.

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As to Barati, nothing could divert his thoughts from the scene which had just passed at the house of M. de Lostanges, and from that which was about to take place, doubtless, at the dwelling of the princess of Puzzano.

Reflection convinced him of the unworthiness of his conduct, and perhaps of his imprudence, and if he could have retraced his steps, he would have preferred the union which he had so carelessly abandoned, to that which had been so suddenly and mysteriously offered to him; but the rupture had been formal and public, and his only hope now lay in the success of the enterprise in which he was at present engaged. Once in this train of thought, he reflected upon the prospect offered by the future, and he adorned it with colours so rich and glowing, that he reached Mirepoix in a kind of pleasant intoxication, from which he was destined to be but too rudely aroused.

He inquired of a person whom he met, if he could point him to the abode of the princess of Puzzano. The individual thus addressed was a round and ruddy canon, but no sooner had he heard the name of the princess of Puzzano, than he scowled and answered:

'She dwells where such a woman ought to dwell, for it was very natural that the mother of a sorcerer should take up her lodgings in the house of a heretic.'

'Let the house belong to whom it may,' said Barati, 'I beg you to direct me to it, for I must see the princess this evening.'

'Well, then,' said the canon, 'retrace your steps, and fronting the convent, on your right hand, you will see a large double door, with a devil's claw, holding an apple for a knocker. That is the house that belongs to that son of perdition, called Bayle, and it is there that the princess of Puzzano has chosen to dwell.'

Barati pursued the path which had been pointed out to him, but he could not prevent himself from remarking the singular concurrence of circumstance, which, on every occasion, helped to foster the prejudices which existed against the family of Puzzano.

Barati reached the house, and knocked at the door. It was opened in silence: he entered, and it was closed upon him with the same precaution. A domestic led him through a long corridor until he reached a saloon upon the ground floor, which opened probably upon the garden, but all the windows of which were carefully closed.

When he entered he beheld seated around a table, upon which stood lighted tapers of green wax, the princess of Puzzano and her daughter Leonore, then scarcely fifteen years of age, but already giving promise of that majestic beauty, which she was destined to retain to such an age, that the infant which Giacomo had just met upon his journey would one

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day become enamoured of her. A man, in black attire, was also seated at the table, whom Barati judged to be the notary. A gentleman whom he did not know stood in the corner of the saloon, conversing with Giacomo, and to the advocate's great astonishment, he beheld also the Duke de Nevres, dressed with extraordinary splendour.

Still there was nothing yet, which could alarm Barati, although the presence of the duke was disagreeable to him.

Scarcely had he entered the saloon, when Giacomo advanced to meet him, took him by the hand, and led him to his mother.

'Madam,' he said, 'be grateful to M. Barati for his presence here, since, for the sake of rendering us the service which we expect of him, he has left unfinished the most important act of a man's life.'

'I am aware of the devotion of Master Barati, and I thank him for the evidence which he now gives us of it,' replied the princess with a dignity so cold and icy that it seemed little in accordance with the reception due to a future son-in-law.

Barati gazed at Giacomo, whose coolness was imperturbable, and who then led him to his sister, saying:

'You have not erred in your praise of Master Barati, my sister: you see that he wishes to show himself worthy of the good opinion which you have formed of him.'

This address did not much resemble the presentation of a bridegroom to his affianced bride, and the reply of Leonore was by no means calculated to reassure Barati.

'I thank Master Barati for his zeal, and I am delighted to see him here. I know that he is a prudent adviser, and I feel assured that he will agree with me in thinking that this contract has been drawn up with unnecessary haste.'

In whatever sense Barati interpreted these words, the inference was lamentable for him. If they were addressed to him as an advocate and a councillor, it was evident that he could not be the bridegroom; if he supppsed them addressed to him as a bridegroom, the bride had just openly declared that she was in no haste to accomplish this union.

Still, the tone in which Leonore had spoken was kind and friendly; a suspicion now flashed across his mind; had he been deceived by the ambiguous words of the Prince of Puzzano? and had these words been framed with an intent to entangle him in a ridiculous snare? An icy tremor shook his frame, and he was about to interrogate Giacomo, when the latter said:

'I hope Master Barati that you will excuse the singularity of my conduct under the present circumstances, but you well know that every moment is precious to a man whose life may be perilled by the slightest indiscretion; I pray you to read

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this contract, and tell me if it fulfils the intention of which I spoke to you this morning.'

Barati took the contract, not to obey the prince, but to obtain time, while he feigned to read it, to form his resolution. He glanced over it at first, raising his eyes from time to time, to catch some sign, some gesture, which might warn him of what was passing. But all were motionless and silent. 'It is, perhaps, a jest,' he thought. He then read the contract more attentively, and saw that it was drawn up entirely to the advantage of the husband.

But Barati had by this time found means to learn the truth, without betraying the wild hopes which he had fostered, hopes which vanished one by one as he read the enumeration of the titles and immense fortune of Leonore. How could he have imagined that a woman so nobly born, and who was related to the highest families of France, of Italy, and of Spain, would be sacrificed to a man of his station, notwithstanding the position to which she was reduced by the crimes and condemnation of her brother. Barati felt enraged at his own folly, and at him who had so dexterously taken advantage of it, and although not yet convinced that he had been deceived, he rose with an air of calmness, and tossed the contract disdainfully upon the table.

'Well,' said Giacomo, 'what think you of it?'

'I think that the contract has been drawn up with great foresight for the interest of him whom it concerns; but I think also that the mother who should sign it would be wanting in every duty, and the man who should accept it would be a wretch deserving ignominy and contempt.'

These words did not fail to produce the effect which Barati expected. The duke started from his seat, and exclaimed:

'Have you brought this advocate hither to insult me?'

The truth was now evident. Barati had been tricked; he had been deceived by the ambiguous phrases of Giacomo, and the latter had fulfilled the threat which he had uttered to break off his marriage with Mademoiselle de Lostanges. It was like a thunderstroke to him. He was upon his guard, however, and did not evince the slightest emotion at the words of the Duke de Nevres.

'If my remark is insulting, monseigneur,' he said, 'you should not find fault with me, for I was ignorant that they could apply to any one here present.—The Prince of Puzzano can bear witness that I was not aware that this contract concerned you.'

'He is right, and he is a man of sense also,' said Giacomo. He then approached Barati, and added, in a low voice, 'you will pardon the jest, I hope. I had passed my word, and as I trifled with my own life to keep it, I might well trifle with your ambition, to which I promise ample amends.'

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'Promise for promise, monseigneur,' replied Barati, in an under tone. 'I swear to you at this moment, and I will prove that I know how to keep my oath, I swear that I will have vengeance for this insult, be it in ten years, twenty, or at the hour of my death.'

'You can do it on the instant, Master Barati,' said the prince, 'for, although the guard of this city consists of but six soldiers, yet they are enough to arrest a single man, above all, were you to put yourself at their head.'

Barati smiled disdainfully, and rejoined,

'You deceive yourself, monseigneur, you are at this moment committing a cruel wrong against your unhappy sister, and I do not wish to prevent it. But counting from the day after to-morrow, remember that there lives a man who has sworn your ruin. Now, if you will permit it, the advocate and councillor will perform his duty, in pointing out some omissions which have been left in this contract.'

'Do so,' said the prince, who, in spite of his resolution, had been disturbed by this threat, 'and I hope that, since the advocate remains, he will not leave us dissatisfied with the fee which his kindness has so well merited.'

'I accept the proposition, monseigneur,' replied Barati, with a smile. 'I know of no better weapons than those which one receives from his enemy"

Giacomo did not reply, but he muttered in a low tone:

'I was mistaken in this man.'

Barati at once entered into a conversation with the notary, in which he manifested his perfect acquaintance with the details of his profession. He guaranteed Leonore's rights in a manner much more ample and secure than had been done in the contract; he placed her dowry beyond the reach of her husband, and ensured her future independence.

'You are very careful of my sister's interests,' said Giacomo, smiling.

'I am securing an asylum,' he replied calmly, 'to her whom I have resolved to deprive of her nearest protector.'

'It is war, then, without mercy.'

'Yes, monseigneur. And now,' he added aloud, 'you can sign the contract.'

Leonore cast a bewildered glance upon Barati, but he stood calm and motionless, as if he did not observe her. The contract was signed; Giacomo, who had disappeared for a moment, returned with a casket, which he reached to Barati.

'Does this appear sufficient?' he said, opening it.

'With this, and a firm will,' he replied, 'one might shake the throne of France. Adieu!'

'Adieu then!' said Giacomo.

'Adieu!' repeated Barati.

And he left the house.

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To leave no obscurity in the explanation of the occurrences which have previously been recounted, we must add that Leonore, although her heart was occupied by no other passion, felt a kind of antipathy for the Duke de Nevres. Notwithstanding his rank, and the education which he had received, yet a germ of rudeness and grossness was implanted in his soul, which all his efforts were unable to conceal, and which rendered him almost repulsive to Leonore. Still, urged by her mother and her brother, she had at last consented to the marriage, but she had obtained, as a special favour, that the ceremony should be deferred for some months, and that she should remain with her mother until the duke had obtained the king's consent to this union, which might compromise his standing at court, but which, by a singular chance, served only to augment it. Louis XIV. already nourished the design of placing his family upon the Spanish throne; as we have before said, the house of Puzzano was allied to the most noble families of Spain and Italy, and the great king would doubtless be well pleased to see among the nobles who depended upon his favour, a man who might exert a considerable influence upon the success of his design.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Let us now continue our narrative and return to Barati. After leaving Mirepoix for Toulouse, two thoughts alone occupied his soul. The first was to avenge himself against Giacomo, the second to bring about his marriage with Armande. He looked upon this alliance as a certain, or at least very probable step to the office occupied by the president, and, born of an obscure family, he had set his hopes upon the accomplishment of this project.

In the hazardous situation in which Giacomo now found himself, he ought doubtless to have given up the appointment which he had made with Mademoiselle de Lostanges, but although he might have spared Barati if he had known of his intention to renew this alliance, yet when he heard the menaces of the young advocate, he resolved to pursue his object.

The sole precaution which he took was to obtain a promise from his mother that she would remove all evidence of his existence. As to the casket which he had placed in Barati's hands on the preceding evening, it might have been exceedingly dangerous if it had been discovered in the abode of the princess, and in giving it to the young advocate, he had transferred that danger to him. In addition to this, Giacomo advised his mother to display great liberality towards the convents and the chapter of the city which was henceforth to be her place of residence. Giacomo had too often tested the power of gold not to counsel its employment as a universal

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remedy for all annoyances in this life, and the result of this narrative will show that he judged rightly.

Giacomo remained but two days at Mirepoix, where he held a long and secret interview with the Comte de Frias, the stranger who was present at the scene which we have described. Frias remained at Mirepoix, where he was to meet the Baron de la Roque, and Giacomo departed for Toulouse. He did not doubt but Barati had taken serious measures against him, and it was for this reason that our adventurer disguised himself in a costume, which, more than any other, was calculated to protect him against the scrutiny of those who might lie in wait for him. He put on the dirty tattered robe of a Capuchin monk; a false beard, blood shot-eyes, and a nose glowing with the hue of the grape, which so effectually transformed him, that when, to test the security of his disguise, he presented himself to his mother, remembering her son's counsel, she offered him her purse.

It was in this dress that Giacomo reached Toulouse, and entered the city on the very evening of his appointment with the beautiful Armande. The garb of a Capuchin was without doubt admirably suited for the peaceful traveller, but it was detestable for the lover; he directed his steps therefore to the dwelling of Vergnes in order to change it. Giacomo's astonishment was extreme, at hearing in the chamber adjoining the one in which he had entered, the voice of Barati, who was conversing with the innkeeper, and interrogating him as to the motives which led him to the president's hotel on the day appointed for the signing of the contract.

Notwithstanding Barati's threats, Vergnes refused to answer, and declared he was there by accident. The young advocate, on the contrary, maintained that he had been sent by some one, to watch him, and without naming the Prince of Puzzano, he described him so that Vergnes could not mistake the man to whom he referred; but as the innkeeper persisted in his denials, Barati, seeing that he could obtain nothing by threats, began at last to speak of a reward. A change in the tone of Vergnes' voice, warned Giacomo of the weakness of him whose fidelity was so necessary to him; he pushed open the door, and thrusting his head and hands through the aperture, said in a nasal tone:

'Forget not the faithful servants of God!'

'The devil take the Capuchin!' said Vergnes.

'Begone!' cried Barati, 'these beggars are as impudent—'

'My son,' interrupted Giacomo, 'hunger chases the wolf from the woods, and it compels me to enter this house notwithstanding its evil reputation.'

'Well then,' said Barati, 'here is a louis: it is enough I suppose, to give you strength to go and beg elsewhere.'

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'Ha,' said the Capuchin, gazing at the louis, 'your generosity does not cost you much; this louis is a counterfeit.'

'A counterfeit!' cried Barati, retaking it, and examining it without being able to discover any marks to convince him that it was spurious.

'It is a counterfeit, I say, and I know it, for I have been unlucky to day; I have already received one like it from a muleteer as he was leaving Toulouse, and you may be sure I was surprised at his liberality. I stopped at the mint as I passed to change it, and, but for the sanctity of my garb, and the reputation which the brothers of our order have acquired for their virtues and sobriety, they would have arrested me.'

Barati had received this louis with several others in the casket which Giacomo had placed in his hands at Mirepoix. All this gold was counterfeit then, and his pretended liberality was but a new trick. On the other hand this Capuchin had just declared, that he had received a similar louis from a muleteer; this muleteer then must be the prince, who had resumed his former disguise. Barati inquired after his age, his features, and Giacomo described himself accurately as he had appeared at the advocate's house on the evening of his arrival in the city.

'And you say, reverend father,' cried Barati, 'that he has left Toulouse.'

'Yes, forsooth, mounted upon a shabby mule, and jogging on towards Montauban.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Barati, 'I will overtake him though I ride night and day.'

With these words he hastened from the house, while Vergnes gazed with dismay at the Capuchin, and cried:

'Accursed Capuchin! why have you meddled in the matter? why tell this young man the route of the muleteer?'

'Ha! gently, gently!' replied Giacomo, laughing heartily, 'do not assume that air of indignation; if I had not entered in time, you would, for a few false louis, have told this Barati that the muleteer who pays you in fair and loyal crowns, would return one of these days to resume the costume of a Spanish Don which he left with you.'

'Monseigneur, it is you then?' cried Vergnes gazing at him attentively and with astonishment.

'Yes, knave, but stay! try to furnish me with something fit to eat, and prepare a chamber where I can dress myself somewhat more becomingly.'

Vergnes obeyed, and the neighbouring clock had scarcely struck eleven, when Giacomo left the house clothed and armed as he had been when he entered the saloon of the President De Lostanges.

About an half an hour before midnight he stood at the garden gate; he pushed it; it was unfastened; he entered,

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but he saw no one. This circumstance alarmed him. It might be a snare set for him, for with the gate once closed behind him, a few resolute men would suffice to overpower him.

Armande, however, did not appear capable of such a piece of treachery; still he kept near the gate, ready to fly at the least sign of danger. He stood for some time without hearing a sound; he waited until the clock struck twelve, but all remained quiet. A quarter of an hour passed and Giacomo began to think that his alarm was unfounded: he was about to advance farther into the garden when he saw a female coming towards him, but it was not Armande; this woman cast a watchful glance on all sides, and seeing no one, she turned and spoke to some person who followed her:—

'I was very sure, mamselle, that he would not come, that he would not dare to come. We can fasten the gate.'

'Not yet, Rosine,' replied Armande, with a faltering voice.

'Alas! he risked his life to save me, and it would be the basest ingratitude to disappoint him. Perhaps he has some favour to ask of me.'

'Oh, how could I doubt,' said Giacomo to himself, 'how could I doubt but she would be here! and how careful she has been not to breathe my name! how she conceals the interest which prompts her under a semblance of gratitude for the service which I have rendered her. Oh, woman! Still she is very beautiful, and I will love her, if she will let me—but—'

These reflections were interrupted by several voices which were heard at the further extremity of the garden. They called Armande, who ran towards them, while Rosine advanced hastily to close the gate.

'In truth, Armande, I do not understand your conduct,' said M. de Lostanges, 'what madness has seized you, that you leave your chamber at this hour to walk in the garden? Go in—it is time to shut the doors; you know that robbers infest this part of the city, and they might scale the wall, steal into our apartments, and—'

All this was said at intervals, and interrupted by Armande's excuses, who replied that she had a headache, and that she had gone down into the garden to breathe the fresh air. The sound of their voices gradually grew less distinct; Giacomo heard the doors closed, and he remained alone in the garden.

Instead of being disappointed, our adventurer was delighted at this interruption.

'Unless her apartment looks upon the street,' he said, 'she will open the casement, and we will see if she does not descend again, when I let her know that I am here.'

He approached the house, and saw a light brought into one of the chambers. But was this Armande's? This must be ascertained. Giacomo's patience in waiting for the proper moment was equal to the rapidity with which he acted when

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it arrived. He remained for an hour leaning against a tree in front of this chamber; he stood motionless, his eyes did not leave the casement. At the expiration of this time the light was extinguished, and Giacomo was beginning to despair of the success of his adventure, when the casement was thrown open, and some one leaned out over the balcony. Presently a voice murmured softly:

'Giacomo Spaffa!'

'He is here!' replied Giacomo.

Armande was unable to repress a cry.

'Rash man!' she said, 'fly! fly!'

'Not until I have spoken with you.'

'Hush! hush! my father's chamber looks upon the garden.'

'Come down, then, I implore you.'

'It is impossible! the doors are locked, and my father has the keys.'

'Well, then,' said Giacomo, 'I will ascend to you.'

He approached the window, but the wall was entirely bare and destitute of lattice work, by means of which he might scale it; and the shutters, which closed the window of the chamber beneath Armande's, did not offer the least support by which he could raise himself to the upper story.

'Oh, it is madness!' said Armande in a whisper, 'do not attempt it. Some harm will befal you.'

'Lose all, or win all!' thought Giacomo at this moment.

'I must speak to you or die!' he said. 'Throw me down a cord, a ribbon—anything that I may ascend to you.'

'I cannot! never!' said Armande.

She had scarcely spoken when they heard a door thrown open at the farther side of the house, and a voice said:

'Seek him, Pluto, seek him!'

'You are lost!' said Armande, withdrawing. 'They have loosed the watch dog.'

And Giacomo heard the noise made by an enormous dog following his track through the alleys of the garden. He drew his sword to defend himself, when, the next moment, he beheld a sheet cast from the window: he grasped it, and, with the dexterity of a corsair, familiar with the most difficult feats of agility, he mounted to the window, entered the chamber, and drew up the sheet. At this moment the dog came bounding and barking beneath the casement.

'What is the matter?' said Armande.

'It is I, mamselle,' replied the gardener. 'I thought I heard a noise in the garden.'

'I opened the window to breathe the fresh air,' she replied.

A noise was now heard in the house; Giacomo withdrew into the alcove, and the venerable president appeared in his night-dress, with a lighted taper in his hand.

'Do you wish to prevent the whole house from sleeping?'

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he said. 'Come, get to bed, and shut the window, and do not render it necessary for me to return to see if you have obeyed me.'

Armande closed the casement.

'I shall be employed in writing the whole night, and if I hear this window opened again, you will repent of it.'

He went out, and Armande and Giacomo were left alone.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Some days had passed since the evening when Giacomo had so boldly entered the chamber of Armande. During this while, notwithstanding the silence which M. de Lostanges had requested of those who had been present when the marriage of Barati and Armande was so suddenly interrupted, rumours of the occurrence had spread abroad throughout Toulouse, and a thousand improbable tales were invented to account for it. This, however, was universally maintained, that Mademoiselle de Lostanges had received a deadly and unpardonable insult.

The president's indignation had at first prompted him to take some serious measures to avenge himself, above all, when he believed that his daughter had been abandoned for another woman; but when he was satisfied that Barati had contracted no new alliance; when he knew that the bridegroom had left the house of his father-in-law so abruptly, solely to witness the contract of marriage between the Duke de Nevres and Leonora of Puzzano, his anger was changed to astonishment.

What duty, what obligation, what oath indeed could have induced him to act thus, could have led him to interrupt a marriage which he had so ardently desired! And for what? Apparently for nothing. It was an inexplicable enigma, which Barati's previous conduct could scarcely explain: his relations to the princess of Puzzano were a subject of general comment, and each asked the other what powerful tie could so bind him to this family, that the slightest word was sufficient to summon him from a ceremony of such interest. This supposed obligation, combined with the singular manner in which this summons had been brought to Barati, seemed to indicate some criminal plot between him and the princess of Puzzano, and it was resolved that the advocate should be summoned before one of the chambers of parliament. When he appeared before the chamber which was to interrogate him, Barati assumed an air of modest diffidence, and said:

'I am prepared to obey the orders of the parliament, and to render an account of my proceedings, but I will venture to ask a favour which can have no influence upon the result of this inquiry. To explain my conduct it is necessary that I should reveal a secret which concerns the honour of a noble

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family; I have taken an oath to reveal this secret to the first president of the parliament alone, in case I should be interrogated, and I am not authorized to disclose it in full session, unless the first president is dissatisfied with the propriety of my course. I venture, therefore, to hope from the indulgence of the chamber that it will permit me to observe a sacred oath, for if the first president refuses to answer for the uprightness of my conduct, it will then be in your power to demand a stricter investigation.'

This method of procedure sadly disappointed the curiosity of the councillors, but the strict integrity of the first president left no room for cavil, and it would have been an insult to decide that he was unworthy of being the sole judge of the validity of Barati's explanation.

Our young advocate had taken his measures shrewdly; and he was sufficiently sure of the first president's discretion to know that if he could but convince him of the truth of what he told him, the secret which he was about to entrust to him would never pass his lips, and consequently that no one could test its accuracy.

Barati's request was granted, although his words had excited even greater curiosity than his conduct; he at once retired with the first president, who led him into his private cabinet. The following was the fable which Barati narrated to him:

'One night,' he said, 'as I passed the hotel of the Princess of Puzzano, I heard loud cries in the interior of the building, and I stopped to learn the cause. I heard the sound of a violent conflict, and I was about to knock at the door, when I saw a man leap from the window of the hotel. I at first thought that it was a robber, and that having been frustrated in his attempt, he had wounded some female of the house, for I had recognized the voice of a woman begging for mercy. I rushed upon the man to seize him, but, being unarmed, I was assailed and beaten to the ground before I observed that my antagonist was the Duke de Nevres.

'I recognised him at the moment that he drew his sword to thrust me through, when he was disarmed in his turn, by a man who attacked him unawares. I rose, and the duke took to flight. I was about to thank my liberator, when he asked me why I had been thus assaulted. I related to him what I had seen and heard, and did not conceal that this man was the Duke de Nevres.

'"The Duke de Nevres!"' he cried, in a gloomy tone, "oh! I might have known it." Then he added: "I have just saved your life, and I have the right to demand a recompense."

'I offered him money; he refused it, and said;

'"You do not understand me; promise me only that, at

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whatever hour of the day or night I come to seek you, in whatever manner I warn you to follow me, you will obey me on the instant."

'I promised, and the man required me to take an oath upon a sacred relic he wore about him.

'This was the person who came to seek me at the house of M. de Lostanges, and the moment that he spoke to me of a marriage, I understood his meaning. I had sworn to follow him, and I did so, and in truth when I arrived at Mirepoix I found the Duke de Nevres at the house of the Princess of Puzzano. The unknown led me in company with her and the Duke de Nevres, into a separate chamber.

'"Here is a witness of the outrage which you inflicted upon my sister," said the unknown, who then declared himself to be the Prince of Puzzano; "you would fain deny it, but he is here to attest it."

'"I know him," said the duke, "and I confess my fault."

'"Well, then," rejoined the prince, "he is to be a witness of the reparation which you will make to Leonore, by espousing her, or he is to be a witness of my vengeance."

'Notwithstanding his audacity, the duke consented to the terms which had been offered to him, and I was present at the signing of the contract. These are the facts in all their native simplicity,' said Barati; 'I have requested permission to reveal them to you, in order to justify my conduct; the prince has authorized me to do so, though under the restrictions which I have mentioned, if they are found admissible. I acted as I thought it my duty to act, for whatever are the crimes of her brother, Mademoiselle Leonore of Puzzano is worthy of all respect; and again, whatever opinion may be passed upon the prince, I ought not to forget that I owe my life to him.'

'I knew,' rejoined the first president, 'that you were present at this marriage, and I could not comprehend what interest could summon you thither at such a moment. I understand it now, and far from blaming your conduct, I approve of it, and I will be warrant for you in face of the whole parliament. Are you content with this?'

'With your kindness, I am, sir, more than I can express,' replied Barati, 'but this affair has not the less cost me my happiness. I venture, therefore, to request a favour of you, my lord.'

'What favour?'

'It is true I am not so mad as to hope that M. de Lostanges will pardon me for the insult, unintentional as it was, which I have been guilty of towards him; yet if I could hope that you would have the kindness to say to him, that it has never entered into my thoughts to fail in respect towards him, that I venerate and honour him as I ought, this would console me

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for the loss of an alliance so greatly above my deserts—an alliance so dear to me, that it required all the sanctity of an oath pronounced upon a sacred relic, to compel me unwillingly to disturb it.'

As he spoke, Barati shed a few tears, and the first president, charmed with his modesty and grief, replied graciously :

'Console yourself, Master Barati, console yourself: M. de Lostanges has some esteem and friendship for me, and I will, if possible, arrange the affair.'

Barati having thus repaired the evil which Giacomo had caused him, pondered now upon the means of retaliation. We will not relate the various useless attempts which he made to discover the prince; he suspected indeed that Vergnes could give him important information, but he found this man inaccessible to his bribes; besides this, the young advocate no longer dared to frequent his house; for, thanks to the intervention of the first president, he had resumed the hope of espousing Mademoiselle de Lostanges, and it was of importance that no suspicion should be aroused as to the correctness of his deportment. We also will be silent concerning the respective position of Armande and Giacomo, for that which we are about to recount will sufficiently explain it.

Two months had passed since the scene of the marriage contract, the same preparations for a similar event had been made in the hotel of the President de Lostanges; the same persons were present, and in addition, the first president of the parliament, and as at that time Barati repaired thither in the morning.

Armande, more terrified, more pallid than on the former occasion, was seated near her mother, when the advocate entered. At this moment M. de Lostanges arose and said :

'I have invited you all, my friends, to witness the completion of that ceremony, which, two months ago, was interrupted by the sudden departure of M. Barati. He could not have entered my house again, except to make this reparation. And this reparation I would not have accepted, had not the first president assured me that the conduct of M. Barati was prompted by no motive which could be offensive, or insulting to me or to my family. Neither would this have sufficed, for not the slightest stigma must rest upon the man who is destined to be the guardian of my daughter's happiness; but the first president has declared, and will declare it to you also, that M. Barati was compelled to leave my house by an imperious appeal of honour, having been summoned to perform an action which deserves praise instead of blame, and which saved from ruin a young and innocent maiden. It is for these reasons, gentlemen, that I have consented to conclude this union; it is for this purpose that I have requested your presence.'

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All present testified their approbation, and overwhelmed Barati with compliments. As to Armande, she seemed to have heard but a single sentence of her father's address—that Barati had risked his own happiness to save a young and innocent maiden, and she murmured, while the tears came into her eyes.

'Oh! everywhere deceit and falsehood!'

Still, however, it seemed as if she expected some new interposition, but the hour passed by, the contract was read, was signed, and the pen was placed in her hand. With a bewildered air she approached the table near which Barati was standing; she started back at first, but the latter said to her mildly:

'Sign it, mademoiselle; I know how to pardon disappointed hopes.'

What was the meaning of these words? was he aware of the liason of Armande and Giacomo, or did he allude to her present state of suspense, which was so plainly stamped upon her features. Armande could not understand it, but impelled by a feeling of despair, she signed the contract, then rose, as if startled at what she had done, tottered forward, and fell in a swoon upon the floor.

The insult which she had received from Barati, and which she had not pardoned, perhaps, as her father had done, seemed to be a sufficient explanation of the anxiety which she had manifested of the reluctance with which she consented to this union, and of the swoon which followed the act which rendered it irrevocable. M. de Lostanges seemed to look upon it in this light, for, turning to Barati, who stood gazing gloomily upon Armande, he said:

'Do not be alarmed, the wife will readily pardon in the husband the wrongs of the bridegroom towards the bride.'

Two hours after this, the marriage ceremony was performed in the chapel of the capital, and Armande returned home with a calmness which seemed to have originated in some settled resolution. The remainder of the day passed in quiet, and the bride appeared entirely to have forgotten the grief which had oppressed her in the morning.

When evening came she was led to the nuptial chamber, whither Barati soon followed her. He found Armande still up, her features agitated, and she seemed with difficulty to control some powerful emotion.

Barati paused upon the threshold, and Armande said:

Enter, sir, for it is certainly the first, and perhaps the last time that you will cross the threshold of this chamber.'

Barati rushed toward her and gazed upon her with an affrighted air, for he imagined that her despair had prompted her to make some attempt upon her life.

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'*Grand Dieu!*' he exclaimed, in a faltering voice, 'what have you done, and what means this paleness?'

'Listen to me, sir,' said Armande, 'there is a fearful account to be settled between us.'

Barati still gazed upon her; she directed him by a sign to take a seat, and sank into a chair.

'I have deceived you, sir,' said Armande, 'yet I do not for that reason think myself unworthy of you, for you have obtained my hand by falsehood.'

'What mean you?' cried Barati.

'It was not to save a young maiden from dishonour that you followed the man who came to seek you.'

'*Mon Dieu*!' exclaimed Barati.

'It was in the hope of connecting yourself with a family whose wealth could, more effectually than mine, assuage your burning thirst for gold.'

'Madam,' exclaimed Barati, 'who has whispered such slanders in your ear?'

'He who knows as well as you do that they are truths.'

'She pauzed, and Barati gazing sharply upon her, slowly repeated the words: 'He who knows as well as I that they are truths?'

'The prince of Puzzano,' said Armande.

'Do you know him?'

'Yes,' said Armande, 'I know him.'

'Since when?' cried Barati.

'Since the night when you compelled the duke to silence—he was near me when you threatened him with the disclosure of a letter, the publication of which would ruin him.'

'And since then?' said Barati, with his eye fixed upon Armande.

'Since then,' she rejoined, hesitating, 'since then—'

While she was striving to subdue the emotion which agitated her, a slight noise was heard below the window. She started, and glancing towards it, said in a faint voice:

'He is there! he comes too late to save me, but he has come in time to tell you, that between you and me there can exist nothing in common but the name.'

She at once threw up the window, and Barati heard some one ascend the wall. Confused and agitated, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, he retired into a corner of the apartment, and in a moment Giacomo leaped in at the window.

'I received your billet this morning,' he said, 'when I was twenty leagues from here, and I hastened hither with all speed; it is not too late, I hope.'

'Look!' said Armande, pointing to Barati:

'What! this marriage is—'

'Is concluded,' said Barati, advancing.

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'And you have consented, Armande?' cried Giacomo.

'It is now eight days that I have been waiting for you,' she said, trembling and bewildered; 'and when I thought that you had forsaken me, what could I do but hide my dishonour beneath the name of a man, who is so skilful in the art of acquiring that respect which he deserves no more than I do.'

A thrill of fury darted through Barati's frame. He cast a wild glance around the chamber, as if searching for a weapon; but Giacomo hurling him to the floor with his powerful arm, and placing his poignard to his throat, exclaimed:

'Listen, Barati, if you value your life, you must respect this woman. Not a word that can injure her—do you hear? She doubted my fidelity, she had not the firmness to resist this union, and she will suffer the penalty for life; but forget not this, Barati—I know you, I can read the very depths of your sordid and ambitious soul; at my will I can dishonour you or slay you—I permit you to live, honoured, respected. But Armande shall remain without blemish in the eyes of the world. Do you consent?'

'Do you love this woman?' said Barati, with a strange accent of calmness and resignation.

'Yes, I loved her, and so well, that I would have made her my wife, had I had a name to betow upon her.'

A savage smile played about Barati's lips, and he replied:

'Well, then, I consent, though without prejudice to the vengeance which I have sworn to visit upon you.'

'Be it so,' said Giacomo.

'And now, remain if you will, for, as she has said, this is the first and last time that I cross the threshold of this chamber.'

'No one shall cross it more,' said Armande, 'neither you nor he.'

Barati left the apartment, and Giacomo disappeared almost at the same moment.

'My life is dedicated to misfortune now!' cried Armande, falling upon her knees. 'Oh, God! give me the strength to bear it!'

CHAPTER XXV.

After the scene which we have related in the preceding chapter. after the words of Barati, 'this is the first and last time that I cross the threshold of this chamber,' the reader will readily understand that some secret motive had silenced his resentment, and that he expected his vengeance from some future event. It is necessary also to inform him, that, in the

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meanwhile, Armande's mother had died, and she had left her father's house to occupy that of her husband.

The world in general is very ready to pity those misfortunes which are the result of some thrilling accident, some evident catastrophe; but it refuses to put faith in the sorrows which are concealed beneath the outward show of an even mode of life, and if it suspects some griefs, from the anxious features of the victims, it prefers to attribute them to sigularity and caprice of character rather than to a real and sufficient cause.

In truth, to look upon Barati and his wife—the one young, full of activity, devoted to his studies, and already rewarded by considerable success; the other, young also, beautiful, enjoying perfect liberty, treated with respect by her husband, mistress of a fortune above her rank—to look upon them thus, it would be difficult to imagine that they were not happy. But from what we have already related, the reader will easily comprehend that a more miserable condition could scarcely be found than that of these two beings, chained thus for life together.

It was in vain that they arranged their domestic routine so as to meet as seldom as possible; at table, in the world, they were forced to endure each other's presence, and at the same time to wear upon their brows the calmness and serenity which never visited their hearts. After a while, an event occurred which augmented the tortures of their life. Barati, who had sought relief in excessive labour from the thought which gnawed incessantly upon his bosom, fell dangerously ill.

Under these circumstances the duties of a wife are plain and imperious; to watch day and night at her husband's pillow, to entrust to no other hands those cares which are required by his position, this is the duty of every wife, and this duty Armande imposed upon herself. But what was there to cheer her in this task? Love? No! Hope? She had lost all hope! And could her husband believe in the sincerity of these attentions? did he not know that they were a farce, a show, to blind the eyes of the world? his condition was more wretched than the poorest beggar, for the beggar, perhaps, has a wife, a sister, a mother, to tend him in sincerity, and to cheer him with love.

Often during this malady were those undesigned cruelties committed on either part, which crush and degrade those who are guilty of them, and those who suffer them. More than once when Armande offered Barati a medicine or a draught prescribed by the physician, he stopped, when upon the point of taking it, and gazing at his wife with a haggard, timid glance, he said to her in an affrighted and yet impetuous tone:

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'Taste it, taste! drink it before me. You would esteem yourself happy to be rid of me!'

Armande, surmounting her disgust for those nauseous draughts, obeyed, placed the cup to her lips, and drank. Barati would then gaze upon her with savage joy, and say:

'It is well! we shall die together, if it is poison.'

On one occasion, driven beyond the limits of that resignation which she had imposed upon herself, Armande replied:

'Oh, would to heaven that it were poison! I have no fear of death!'

These words, wrung from her by grief and indignation, suggested to Barati the thought that she would not recoil from the sacrifice of her own life, in order to avenge herself upon her husband. A cruel and gloomy scene then passed at the bedside of the sick man. Barati would not receive a remedy from the hands of his wife, until she had taken the most solemn oaths that she would not attempt his life; he compelled her to devote her soul to eternal perdition if she deceived him; then, when he had tortured her with all his fears, he would add:

'Drink! drink first!'

With persons of a less resolute character than those of Barati and Armande, one or the other would have put an end to this mutual torture by refusing to grant these cares, or by refusing to accept them; but both had devoted all the power of their souls to conceal beneath a false semblance of harmony and reciprocal affection, the chasm which existed between them, and they sustained this struggle until Barati's returning health came to relieve them from it.

Armande's constancy, perhaps, might have moved Barati; perhaps, in presence of this devotion, so patient, so resigned, the heart of the young advocate might have been softened: and often during his convalescence, he had said to himself that it would be a happiness for him, perhaps, should he generously pardon the past, when an event occurred which restored all the energy of his purpose, all the cruelty of his vengeance.

One evening, Barati, already sufficiently recovered to receive the visits of a few friends, had felt impelled toward this project of forgiveness by the sincere eulogiums which had been showered upon Armande's conduct during his illness. The young wife, admirably performing the fearful part which she played, had had the courage to listen to them without grief, without bitterness; she had demeaned herself like a woman who loves, and is loved in return; her conduct had been simple and natural; all were retiring, when the wife of one of his colleagues, as she left the saloon, approached Barati, and said in a confidential tone:

'And now, oblige her to be more careful of herself; I am

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much mistaken, or Armande is in a condition which renders such exertions dangerous.'

She who uttered these words did not remark the terrible effect which they produced upon Barati; Armande had not heard them. She was left alone, then, with her husband, and as she usually retired as soon as the fearful task which she had to perform was ended, she rose to leave the chamber. Barati, still feeble, pale from his illness, still paler from emotion, rose also, and closing the door of the apartment, he arrested Armande's steps, and said in a tone of fury:

'Is it true?'

'What?' said Armande, recoiling at the threatening glance of her husband.

He gazed long upon her; the words seemed unable to leave his lips; language seemed wanting to his anger. At last he approached her, and grasping her by the arm, he replied in a low but exasperated tone:—

'Must I give my name, then, to the offspring of your guilt?'

Armande turned pale and trembled.

'Is it true?' cried Barati.

'It is true!' responded Armande, falling upon her knees.

'And it was for this, then, that you durst not kill me, durst not destroy yourself with me?'

This dreadful accusation restored the strength of which her husband's words had previously deprived her; rising to her feet, and offering her bosom, she cried:

'Strike, then, sir, strike! for if it is destined to be as wretched as I am, better that it should die before it sees the light,—better that I should die before I see it suffer.'

Whether from pity, whether from the thought of a still more cruel vengeance, or whether that he recoiled at such a crime, Barati stood motionless; he was long silent: then, after having taken time to form his purpose, he said:

'Begone, madam, begone! to-morrow you shall hear my resolution.'

On the following morning, Madame Barati learned, to her extreme surprise, that M. de Lostanges had been summoned by a letter from his son-in-law, in which the latter had communicated to him, in terms of the highest delight, the hope which he entertained of an heir; this news was at once spread abroad, and the day had not ended before she received the congratulations of her friends and family. These congratulations, which are invariably accompanied by slight railleries, were the commencement of a new torture for Armande. What was Barati's object! at what was he aiming? what did he intend to do? Armande would fain have questioned him, but she had not the courage.

About six months had elapsed from the day of their marriage; Barati took his wife to a country house at a little dis-

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tance from the city. Armande accompanied him without opposition; she feared the commission of a crime, but resistance was impossible, and she resigned herself to her fate.

It was in this house that, entrusted to the cares of Rosine, who had been the confidante of her love to Giacomo, she gave birth to a son, and it was while this son was in her arms, that the following scene took place. Barati entered the chamber, and in the presence of Rosine, said to Armande:

'Now, madam, it is time that you should know my will, and my steadfast purpose. I will not give my name to an infant which is not mine; neither will I punish it more severely than the world would punish it for the fault of its mother, were I to speak the truth. It would be the child of shame if I should speak; it shall remain so still, but it shall never be able to cast a stigma upon you.'

'What mean you, sir?' said Armande.

'You shall never see this child again, madam. The time and circumstances of its birth will explain and lend sufficient probability to the story of an accident, and no one will suspect either your dishonour or mine.'

Armande listened anxiously, occupied by a single thought.

'Would you destroy it?' she cried, 'would you destroy it?'

'This child,' said Barati, 'shall be placed in the hands of this woman, your accomplice, and she will entrust it to the care of a man who will rear it.'

Armande cast a bewildered glance upon Rosine, who by a sign seemed to assure her that she would be faithful to the trust.

'Ah, sir, you will not kill it? you will not burthen your conscience with such a crime? You are an honest man, sir!'

Barati's sole reply was a disdainful laugh, and Armande continued, but in a very different tone:

'I should be base indeed if the fear of shame could make me hesitate; you shall not take away this child, you shall not tear it from my arms; let my fault be known, but you shall not destroy it.'

Barati was astonished at this resolution, and he replied in a tone less imperious and less bitter:

'I have told you that it shall live, but I have told you upon what conditions, and you ought to be aware that if I had resolved upon a crime, I would not have suffered this woman to be present at this interview. Your child shall live, I say, but it shall live separated from you.'

'And shall I never see it again?' said Armande.

Barati hesitated: he was aware that the success of his design depended upon the hopes which he left to Armande, and he replied:

'The future may lead to serious changes in our respective

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situations, and perhaps in our feelings; I swear that this child shall live, but forget not the torments which we have both suffered to conceal our position from the eyes of the world; and if the day should ever come when you are permitted to see it, I hope that your affection for it will never lead you to forget that prudence which is so necessary, in order that no one may suspect the motive of your attachment.'

These words offered to Armande a fairer prospect for the future than she had dreamed of, and with her eyes filled with tears, and a heart oppressed at the same time by shame, by grief, and almost by gratitude, she said:

'Well then, sir, conceal it from every eye, and I swear in the face of heaven that whatever you may henceforth require of me, I will do it in return for this generous indulgence.'

Rosine took the child, and carried it from the house; it was wrapped in swaddling clothes which could afford no clue to its origin, and following the directions which had been given her, she carried it to that house into which we have already more than once introduced the reader.

This house was that of the innkeeper Vergnes. She reached it in the middle of the night, and knocked at the door in a peculiar manner, as she had been directed to do.

But before recounting the scene which passed in this house, it is necessary to disclose the motives which had induced Barati to select the dwelling of this Vergnes. He was convinced that Giacomo still kept up his relations with this man, and he felt confident that when once assured that a child had been placed in his keeping, he would probably divine its origin; he judged, also, that if Giacomo's suspicions were once excited on this subject, he would be anxious to discover the truth, and might thus venture upon those steps that would enable Barati to seize this enemy who had escaped him, and who still foiled his pursuit.

Neither was it without an object that he selected Rosine for this strange errand; he had purchased her silence by liberal gifts, yet it was probable that Vergnes would recognise her as a domestic of Madame Barati's, a fact which would doubtless tend to attract Giacomo's attention toward the child. Vergnes, on the other hand, had been informed that a secret service would be required of him, that this service would be rewarded beyond his expectations, and that he would know the moment had arrived, when he heard a peculiar knocking at his door, which was described to him.

When Rosine, therefore, knocked in this manner, Vergnes said to a man who was with him:

'Some one is about to enter who has a secret to confide to me. You know that I spoke to you of the billet which I received. Withdraw then, monseigneur.'

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'I know this secret,' replied Giacomo, 'I alone ought to know it.'

'But, monseigneur—' said Vergnes.

'Forget not that you are in my power, and that I have rewarded you for every service which you have rendered me, at a price which would have enriched ten men of your condition. Besides, you shall have the promised reward, and I will double it. Let me receive the person who is about to enter.'

Vergnes obeyed, and the prince, before giving admission to Rosine, locked the innkeeper in a distant apartment.—He then opened the door, and Rosine entered.

'You have received information,' she said, 'that you would be called upon to render a service to a lady of high rank.'

Giacomo, with his eyes fastened upon the little osier cradle, in which the infant lay, did not answer, but exclaimed:

'Is it a son, Rosine? is it a son?'

'You!' cried Rosine, who now recognised Giacomo, although she was ignorant of his name and rank.

'Yes, I! I was waiting for you.'

'And how could you know—'

'Did I not know Armande's condition, and the time—'

'But who could have told you that I would come here?'

'I learned it from the billet that master Barati sent to Vergnes; I recognised the writing, notwithstanding the care with which it was disguised. Give me this child, and say to its mother, that I will place it as securely as she could wish, beyond the reach of her husband's vengeance.'

'Rosine obeyed. Giacomo took the infant, then, after having kissed it, and gazed upon it for awhile, he said in a tone of more emotion than would have been expected from the sternness of his character:

'And she consented to abandon it?'

Rosine then related the scene which had passed at the country house.

'Ah!' cried Giacomo, 'she hopes to see it again. This depends no longer upon Barati, it depends now upon me. For the rest,' he added, taking up a pen, and writing a few lines, 'give this to your master, and tell your mistress that she need no longer fear.'

With these words he gave her a billet which ran as follows:

'I have received from the hands of your servant, the infant which you have abandoned to misery and neglect. It is beyond the reach of your hatred and under the protection of its father. 20th November, 1683.'

It was this fatal date which had been recalled to Barati in the castle of La Roque, and at which he trembled and turned pale.

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And now, when we have briefly narrated the precautions which Giacomo had taken to ensure the safety of his son, we will give an explanation, also, of the word *Uri*, which had terrified Barati no less than that terrible date.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This narrative already contains far too many incidents to permit us to enter into a detailed account of the precautions which were taken by Giacomo to secure the safety of his son. We will merely say that he sought out and found that Francois Gali, whom he had met upon the road between Mirepoix and Toulouse, in the character of a blind beggar. His first step was to unite him in marriage with a maiden who had been brought up in the family of the princess, his mother. He then established him as a fuller in the mountain; he was the same Gali of whom we have spoken in the commencement of this narrative, and the unknown son of Giacomo was that Galidou, who bore the name of his supposed father, with the additional syllable, which, in the south of France, generally distinguishes the son from the father.

Besides this, in order to have in his power those individuals who shared in his secrets, he directed Vergnes to ask for the hand of Rosine, who seemed to him a very suitable wife for the innkeeper, as a reward for the adroitness and complaisance which she had displayed in concealing his *liason* with Armande. Vergnes had but little difficulty in obtaining Rosine's consent, and we have since beheld her as the confidante of the intrigue between the Duchess de Nevres and the Chevalier D'Auterive.

These two points explained, we have a new mystery to reveal to our readers.

After the disappearance of Giacomo's son, Barati and Armande returned to the city, and their mode of life was arranged upon a new plan. The advocate seemed to have entirely forgotten the past; and although his manner was constantly constrained towards his wife, yet he treated her far more kindly than heretofore. Instead of marching directly to his aim, which was that of complete reconciliation, he pursued a circuitous route, and one which, while he seemed to avoid every concession, would be attended, as he thought, with entire success.

Accordingly when they met, instead of retiring as he had hitherto been accustomed to do, Barati would commence a conversation which had no relation to their respective positions, and one which Armande could scarcely refuse to engage in. Thus, one day, after a discussion with his father-in-law upon a subject then under the consideration of parliament, and upon which their sentiments were not in accordance, M. de

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Lostanges having taken his leave, Barati after a momentary silence, during which he seemed absorbed in reflection, turned suddenly to Armande, and said:

'Well, madam, you have here witnessed one of the most vexatious results of our profession. I refer to the discussion which has just taken place between M. de Lostanges and myself.'

'There has been nothing unpleasant in it, as it seemed to me.'

'True,' rejoined Barati, 'but M. de Lostanges has sought honestly to obtain a just and correct view of this affair; I have done the same; your father is certainly one of our most enlightened magistrates; I have studied the laws with zeal and understand them passably well, and still we are of a decidedly different opinion.'

'That happens often with the clearest minds,' said Armande.

'Undoubtedly, but do you know to what this is owing! To these very studies of which we are so proud. It must be confessed that, in spite of ourselves, the habit of deciding upon subjects, only according to the written law, leads us to base our conclusions upon authorities; now, as oftentimes, there are twenty contradictory authorities upon the same subject, the mind becomes bewildered and fatigued by collating and comparing them, and thus it loses somewhat of that natural clearness, which distinguishes at a glance and without reasoning,—that which is just from that which is unjust. An ignorant man, I mean one unacquainted with the law, unembarrassed by its subtle distinctions, would have touched the exact point of this discussion, perhaps, in which we seem both at a loss. Come, you have listened to this argument; what is your opinion?'

'I, sir?' said Armande, with an air of astonishment.

Barati did not wish to remark her surprise, and assuming the appearance of one deeply absorbed in the subject in question, he said:

'Yes, you. Women possess a firm and decided judgment, that arrives at the truth by the most direct road. I am shaken by your father's arguments on the one side, and on the other I am convinced by my own. I may be deceived, I may be wrong, what is your opinion?'

Barati so well assumed the air of a man who spoke merely of business, and who would have spoken as he did to any one who happened to be present, that Armande replied in the same tone:—

'Well, sir, since you ask my opinion, I think that my father is right in equity.'

'Is that your opinion?' said Barati, who had brought about the discussion only to give rise to this incident.

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'Yes, sir.'

'Well, then,' he said, rising, 'I will plead the case according to this view; equity should supercede all written authorities.'

With these words he left the apartment. Some days after, M. de Lostanges said to his daughter with an air of triumph:

'Ah, ah! your husband fell in with my opinion, and we had perfect success.'

And on returning home, Barati said to his wife:

'You were right, madam; we have gained our cause, and I owe this success to you.'

This example will show the steps which Barati took to remove by degrees the barrier which separated him from Armande. Their conversation, it was true, referred to subjects which had no particular interest for them, but it was a great point gained to break up in any respect that isolated condition in which they had stood toward each other. This method of procedure was so skilfully managed by Barati, that his wife did not remark it; she gradually became accustomed to see those hours occupied which she had hitherto passed in sad and cruel reflections, and on some occasions she resumed all the gaiety and frankness of her youth.

But a source of dissatisfaction lay hid beneath this smooth surface. What had become of Armande's child? The greater the kindness with which Barati treated his wife, the less courage did she feel to approach this dreadful subject. She would have done so twenty times ere now if they had remained in a state of hostility and permanent separation. A reproach, a quarrel, an air of coldness even, would have given occasion to an inquiry or a complaint—but how to break this silence by recalling a subject which would so keenly wound Barati? Armande deferred her purpose until to-morrow, and and when to-morrow came she had not the courage to commence a discussion which would open all their wounds afresh.

Her reluctance increased with time; each day of delay rendered the subject more difficult of approach, and six months having thus elapsed, Armande resolved not to apply to her husband, but to make secret inquiries. She was watched too closely, however, to be able to conceal them from Barati; he knew that Armande had asked after the dwelling of Rosine, and that she intended to visit her. He was aware of her object in so doing, but the presence of his wife in Vergnes' house could only be injurious to her reputation. Under these circumstances he tried a decisive stroke; on the morning of the day when Armande intended to pay this visit, a billet from her husband was placed in her hands. It ran as follows:

'I know whither you purpose to repair. This step convinces me of the thoughtless purity of your heart, for I am

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sure that if you were aware that Rosine was the mistress of a house of ill repute, you would not venture to cross the threshold. But you wish to see her, and you shall. This woman will come to-night, when she cannot be recognised. Be in readiness to receive her, and direct your domestics to admit her as an unfortunate creature in whom you are interested, and who is unwilling to be known. This is the counsel of a prudent friend rather than the command of a husband.'

This conduct surprised and touched Armande; a thought of disobedience, so common to suffering hearts, did not enter her mind, and she awaited the evening, but dreading the next interview with her husband.

Barati understood the art of doing well that which he had resolved to do, and with a delicacy which affected Armande still more deeply, he wrote to her from the house of one of his colleagues, informing her that he was detained by important business, and that he should not return home until very late. Armande felt released from a cruel anxiety, and for the first time, perhaps, she reflected seriously upon the change in her husband's conduct.

Rosine was admitted in the evening, but she had nothing to relate except the scene which had passed in the house of Vergnes. As to what had become of the child, what Giacomo had done with it, she was in complete ignorance. Vergnes, her husband, knew no more than she, and the only means of obtaining information was to apply directly to Giacomo. But Giacomo was still the same restless being, appearing at a moment when he was least expected, and disappearing at times, for whole months, when his presence was looked for with certainty.

From all this Armande could draw but one conclusion; namely, that it would be impossible for her to see her child again without the permission of Giacomo, and who could tell the price he would set upon this favour. On the other hand, this child was in the care of its father, and her own protection could never be of such advantage to it as that of this powerful and extraordinary man.—Whether Rosine spoke thus, prompted by Barati, or whether she told the truth, her words sunk into Armande's soul, and acquired form and consistence. She was distressed at the thoughts of eternal separation from her infant, but her own peace of mind and the happiness of her child, perhaps, seemed to require it, and she resigned herself to her fate.

On the morning after Rosine's visit, Barati appeared as if he were perfectly ignorant of what had passed. His first words, more free, more familiar, more affectionate even than usual, restored Armande's courage, who feared lest she might be questioned concerning what she had heard, and concerning the resolution which she had formed. Perhaps, if at this

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moment, Barati had made an appeal to her gratitude, to her repentance, he would have stirred an impulse in her soul which might have given a different colour to the future, but, satisfied with what he had obtained, he did not venture to proceed farther.

He was contented to see this trial pass without destroying the fruits of his previous labours. He was not sufficiently aware that in certain circumstances, (and this is particularly the case in regard to women), not to advance is to lose much ground. The thought occurred to Armande to reach her hand to her husband and to thank him, but she said only a few words which he did not comprehend.

As he inquired after her health, she replied, gazing steadfastly upon him:

'I will be ill no longer.'

Barati either did not or would not understand the meaning of this phrase, and he responded without bitterness, indeed, but without displaying any personal interest in her words:

'It is a resolution which will gratify your father.'

Armande was not irritated at this reply, but she checked the words which were ready to escape from her lips. This moment greatly deferred that reconciliation which might and ought to have been effected at once. Barati and his wife resumed their usual mode of life; it became more familiar, more convenient, more habitual to each of them, and fulfilled every wish that Armande dared to hope for. A new incident was necessary to interrupt this new routine; and while Barati was pondering upon the means to effect this, an event occurred which at once destroyed all that he had obtained. But this event and its consequences are of sufficient importance to be related in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Almost a year had passed since the day when Armande had renounced the hope of ever seeing her child; and Barati, thanks to the secret watch which he had set upon his wife, satisfied that she had not renewed her inquiries on this subject, thought that the time had arrived when he should grant that entire pardon which her conduct had merited. Barati's advances were made insensibly, and with a prudence which he thought the sure guarantee of success. In his first attempt he had, as it were, addressed himself to her mind; he had established between them an exchange of thoughts, indifferent indeed, but familiar and almost confiding; he next approached his wife, not by assailing her heart, but by interesting himself in her dress and the adornment of her person.

One evening, after having returned with her from a gay

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assemblage of friends, he said to her in a tone of sadness which excited her surprise:

'I am not contented with you, madam.'

'In what respect, sir?'

'I almost fear to tell you, but I have been too much chagrined at it to be silent. It is childish, perhaps, but neither you nor I can reform the world; it is necessary to take it as it is, to live as it lives.'

'I do not understand you, sir.'

'Listen, Armande, (it was the first time that this name had passed Barati's lips since the evening of his marriage,) I can perfectly understand that you care but little for dress; it is an employment,' he murmured with a sigh, 'which interests the happy alone; still it should not entirely be despised.'

'I think that I am suitably dressed,' said Armande, who did not see at what he was aiming.

'Suitably!' said Barati, 'that is true; but, perhaps, too simply.'

'Too simply?' rejoined Armande.

'You are young, you—you—are beautiful,' said Barati, hesitating at this word: 'our fortune permits, nay, enjoins a certain style, and it is impossible that the extreme simplicity of your dress should not be the subject of remark. It is true the world will not know the true cause, but it will account for it by imputing to you, and perhaps to me, a vice which is disgraceful at any age, but which is degrading at ours. It will be said that this simplicity arises from low and sordid avarice. I am unwilling to be accused of this vice—I am unwilling that you should be suspected of it. Act differently, then, for the future. I overheard some very annoying whispers on this subject at the assembly this evening. They offended me—they grieved me. Believe me, it cost me much pain to utter a remark which you might consider as a command, while it is in truth nothing more than advice, yet I hope that you will heed it.'

The tone in which Barati spoke strangely disturbed Armande. The words, 'you are beautiful!' pronounced with difficulty and with a deep sigh, revealed to her more clearly than he wished, perhaps, that he had once admired this beauty, which was now a stranger to him.

This interview recalled to Armande's thoughts the singularity of her position; and from an impulse, entirely feminine, when her husband had left the chamber, she stepped to the mirror, and saw in truth that she was beautiful, and she reflected that she was scarcely twenty years, and she began to weep over her twenty years and her beauty. She repulsed the thoughts that were thronging upon her soul; she took refuge in prayer; and when the day dawned, she left her bed more destitute of courage and resolution than ever. On the

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following day Armande found in her chamber an assortment of rich stuffs, of beautiful laces, and of rare and precious jewels.

'You know,' said her husband, 'that we have a celebration of the Floral Games at the academy next week. All the gay world of Toulouse will be present—you ought not to go thither dressed in a manner unsuited to your condition, and it is right that you should appear there in all the splendour of your beauty. I beg you to think of it, therefore.'

Armande obeyed—and at the appointed day, when she entered the saloon in which her husband was waiting for her, she was greatly embarrassed, her eyes were cast to the ground, and her cheeks were covered with blushes, for she felt that she was beautiful. Barati gazed steadfastly upon her, and remained silent.

This silence perplexed Armande; tears came into her eyes, and she said to Barati:

'I am too richly dressed, am I not, sir?'

'No, no!' he said, in a strange tone. 'Your dress is of the same material as that worn by the wife of my colleague, Durand, and these jewels are not more valuable than those of your acquaintance; but it is not your fault if, with this attire, your beauty gives you the air of "a queen."'

'Oh, sir!' said Armande, in great agitation.

'Yes, yes,' said Barati, in a tone of sadness and repressed vexation—'yes, yes, you are beautiful, more beautiful than any woman—'

He paused, and then added hastily:

'Come, come, it is time to go!'

When Armande appeared in the hall of the Floral Games, she was received with a murmur of admiration, and from an emotion which she was unable to repress, she cast a glance upon her husband; he seemed sad and absorbed in thought. She was alarmed, and regretted her triumph; she became sad in her turn.

When they returned home, Barati said to her in a kind tone:

'You have done things only by half, madam. Why did you appear so sad?'

'Were you not sad also?' she replied.

'Oh! I, madam! it is very different; I am very unhappy!'

'And do you think that I am happy?' said Armande.

'No, certainly, madam, no,' said Barati; but, in addition to a past misfortune, you do not suffer a daily torture; you have had the courage to submit to a great sacrifice, and whatever grief may remain, it is but the grief for a duty which you have accomplished. But I have other sorrows.'

Armande gazed upon him in astonishment, and said:

'You, sir?'

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'In truth,' he rejoined, as if hurried away by the violence of his emotions—'in truth, you were very beautiful to-day, and it seemed to me as if the world now for the first time acknowledged it. Every eye was fastened upon you, and every glance seemed to say to me, "You are a happy man to be the husband of so beautiful a woman!" and then, madam, then you can imagine what I suffered!'

'Oh, sir,' replied Armande, while her eyes filled with tears, 'you have been so generous toward me of late—I will conceal myself from the eyes of the world.'

'And if you should conceal yourself,' said Barati, 'could you prevent me from being a prey to the grief which I have been unwilling to acknowledge even to myself, but which has forced itself upon my mind too sensibly to-day. You will conceal yourself, you say? will that prevent me from loving you, and from being tortured at our separation? for I do love you,' he added, sinking upon a chair, and concealing his face with his hands, as if to veil from the eyes of his wife the shame which he felt at the confession of his weakness.

Armande was violently disturbed; the most ardent declaration of love would not have more deeply agitated the bosom of the most innocent maiden. Her heart seemed to cease its beatings; a kind of giddiness seized her, and she was obliged to support herself by a table to prevent herself from falling. To call her emotion joy, to call it grief, would be attributing to a single sentiment, a throng of confused hopes, of fears, of regrets, of doubts. She burst into tears, and exclaimed:

'Oh, *mon dieu! mon dieu!* I am very wretched.'

'Oh!' cried Barati, rising, 'my love terrifies you, it affrights you.'

Armande turned towards him, and said with a faltering voice:

'I do not merit it—I no longer merit it.'

'Armande,' said Barati, taking her hand, 'all is forgotten?'

That hand was cold and tremulous. Barati pressed it. Armande's limbs bent beneath her, and sinking upon her knees, she cried:

'Ah, *mon dieu! mon dieu!* I would give my life, if it could but wipe away my guilt!'

Was this an avowal of the love which the kind cares of her husband had engendered in Armande's bosom? Was it the voice of that gratitude which would fain have repaid his generous forgetfulness by a happiness unmingled with remorse? Was it the terror which she felt at a passion so suddenly revealed?

Barati replied to her exclamation by a moral sentence.

'Armande,' he said, 'repentance is equivalent to innocence in the eyes of the Deity.'

It must be confessed that this fine maxim was at this mo-

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ment sadly out of place; in what respect did Master Barati resemble the Deity, that he should look upon repentance as innocence?

He left Armande after this unfortunate speech. She was not vexed with him for having uttered it, but she grew more calm, her emotion subsided, and she resolved to await with resignation the lot which the future had in store for her.

About this time M. de Lostanges was attacked by a violent and dangerous illness, and Armande wished to watch at her father's pillow.

Barati approved of her resolution, encouraged her to persevere in it, and even went so far as to remind her of her cares for him, and of his injustice toward her under similar circumstances; he thus drew Armande's heart a step nearer to his own, but a single word was sufficient to lay in utter ruin the enterprise which he had hitherto pursued with such perseverance.

One day Armande returned home in a state of extreme anxiety; her father's malady had increased, and his life seemed in imminent danger.

Barati appeared more alarmed at this news than was natural in a son-in-law.

'And is he aware of his condition?' he said.

'So much so that he has sent for his notary and for a priest.'

Barati gazed upon Armande with an expression so extraordinary, so anxious, and at the same time so menacing, that she could not prevent herself from saying:

'What is the matter, sir?'

'Why, this,' said Barati, 'if M. de Lostanges dies in the position in which we now stand, we lose his inheritance.'

'What mean you?' said Armande, endeavouring to comprehend her husband's aim.

'I mean that you must declare that you have a certain hope of becoming a mother.'

'But it would be a falsehood,' cried Armande.

'Is not our existence a tissue of falsehoods?' rejoined Barati, in a tone of smothered fury—'you must say this to your father, madam. It is my wish; it must be so. My indulgence for your past errors deserves this service on your part.'

Barati's avarice had rendered him forgetful of his address and patience. These words at once unveiled to Armande all the horrible hypocrisy of his pretended love. She must be a mother to enrich Barati—that was all.

This blow was so terrible, so unlooked for, that Armande was stupified and bewildered; but she refused to lend herself to the falsehood which he required of her. Her resistance was vain, however, for Barati, with the threat upon his lips to reveal to her dying father the guilt and infamy of his

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daughter, compelled her to obedience, and on that very evening she uttered and affirmed to M. de Lostanges, the falsehood which Barati had dictated to her.

'If that is the case,' said M. de Lostanges, 'the testament which has been drawn up, will become void, and at the proper time it shall be placed in your husband's hands by the notary who received it to-day.'

Barati was well acquainted with the principles of jurisprudence, and he remembered that axiom in the Roman law which has been embodied in all the modern codes:

'*Infans pro nato habetur quoties de suis commodis agetur.*'

'An infant is considered as born in all cases where it concerns its interests.'

But it was necessary that this infant should be born within a time which could not be prolonged. The following was the project, then, that Barati dared to propose to his wife:

'I have driven from my house,' he said, 'the child which was a stranger to me; your love for it rendered it odious to me. The child, a stranger to us both, which it is now necessary to receive into our house, will, at least, suffer no prejudice from any remembrance dishonourable to you or to myself.'

We will not recount the threats, the acts of violence by which he compelled Armande to counterfeit a situation which did not, and which now could never exist, for all hopes of reconciliation were at an end. Armande obeyed. Often she was tempted to tell the truth, for M. de Lostanges was dead, and she had no longer to fear his grief or indignation. She often asked herself if she should not take cruel vengeance upon her husband's avarice, by terminating her own life, and thus cheat his hopes; but Armande had suffered beyond her strength.

She obeyed, as we have said, but she had still the firmness to obtain by this concession, a promise from Barati, that he would permit her to end her days in seclusion.

The time approached. One night, when all in the house were asleep, the advocate entered the garden gate, ascended the stairs, proceeded to his wife's chamber, and said:

'Here is your daughter, madam; here is the heiress of the property of M. de Lostanges.'

A moment after, a domestic was despatched in search of a physician, whose services had been secured by a large bribe, and in a few days the daughter of Vergnes and Rosine was christened by the name of Clemence Barati. The reader has seen how she became the Countess D'Auterive.

But previous to the day of the christening a singular scene occurred in the house of Barati, who had now become a councillor of the parliament. According to the law, a child born,

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and seized of its rights to an inheritance, possessed it irrevocably, and, though it lived but for an hour, all collateral claims were rendered void. Barati therefore demanded the testament of his father-in-law from the notary of M. de Lostanges, as it was now invalid. This testament was brought to the councillor's house by an aged clerk, dressed in an old snuff-coloured coat, with a yellow and wrinkled visage.

'Will you examine it?' he said, 'to see if it is the one you wanted?'

Barati broke the seal, cast a hasty glance over the testament, and with a smile of satisfaction, tossed it into the fire, uttering in a tone of mockery the word, '*Uri*.'

'*Ure*,' rejoined the old man, in a sarcastic voice.

'How!' said Barati, 'what mean you?'

'That your joy has made you forget your Latin, Master Barati.'

'Is it possible?' said the latter, laughing. 'Let it be *Ure*, I do not insist on *Uri*.'

'But I insist upon it,' said the old man; 'for I uttered the word one day when flying from great danger, and dying of thirst, I parodied the sentence of St. Thomas, and exclaimed: "*Melius est sitire quam uri*. It is better to be thirsty than to be burned."'

Barati rose suddenly, and fixing a piercing glance upon the speaker, he said:

'And the danger from which you were flying was that of being burned?'

'As a sorcerer, Master Barati.'

'You?' cried Barati, recoiling, and recognising the man who stood before him.

'I, Master Barati, whom you would gladly burn, doubtless, as you have burned this testament; I, who, without being a sorcerer, have divined what has come of Vergnes' child.'

'Wretch!' cried Barati, 'I have thee at last!'

'Barati,' said Giacomo, drawing a poignard, 'were you stronger and braver than you are, you could not slay me so quickly but that I should have time to accuse Rosine of having disposed of her child: and when the choice is offered her between the truth and the scaffold, you ought to know what she would say. The world would learn that you have purchased her child to pass it off for yours.'

Barati's head dropped upon his breast.

'And now,' continued Giacomo, 'now, that I hold you by your crimes, I warn you that if you make a single attempt to discover me, that it will lead to your destruction rather than to mine. I have business in this part of the country, and I wish to be at liberty here.'

With these words he left the house, before Barati, who was stupified with his boldness, thought of arresting him.

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Now that the reader is acquainted with the origin of the mysterious word *Uri*, which had been recalled to Baratti's remembrance in the castle of La Roque, and which had terrified him even more than the fearful date of the 20th of November, 1683, we will inform him what this business was to which Giacomo had just referred.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The business that Giacomo wished to attend to without hindrance, was the establishment of that vast association for the making of counterfeit coins, in which he desired to engage the most influential inhabitants of the province; but his project was long delayed from the difficulty which he found in discovering a spot suitable to an establishment like that he meditated. If the reader asks what was the aim of Giacomo in such an enterprise, when he was already in possession of considerable wealth, we must give the explanation, (a strange one to say the least) which we found in the old manuscript of which we have spoken. Giacomo lived, as we learn from it, at an age not far removed from the time when the Duke de Rohan, outlawed and condemned to death, had negociated with the Porte for the purchase of the isle of Candia, where he wished to establish a new throne. He had seen the chevalier de Guines, ready to seize the kingdom of Naples, and wrest it from the dominion of Spain, if he had but been seconded by the French fleet, or if he had possessed the means of supporting, for a while, the rebellion of Masaniello.

The man whom we have seen tending the sheep of a fuller in the Pyrenees had dreamed of a kingdom. Trifling as this kingdom might be, lost perhaps, amid the numerous islands of the Mediterranean, he wished to be a sovereign, and thus present to the world the spectacle of a man condemned to the vilest punishment, becoming the founder of a new dynasty. The wealth which had been accumulated by the Prince of Puzzano was already considerable, but the trade of a corsair, by which he had acquired the greater part of it, had grown too hazardous: not that he feared the dangers of strife, but he was well aware that if the true name of the pirate who infested the Mediterranean should be discovered, whatever success and whatever impunity might attend him, it would raise an insuperable barrier to the accomplishment of his projects.

His first step was to establish in the city of Toulouse, a workshop, where he fabricated those counterfeit coins in which he mingled a sufficient alloy of gold and silver to enable them to endure a tolerable close inspection; but he was soon sensible that his secret and that of his associates would quickly be discovered in a populous city, where each neighbour is curious to know what passes in the house adjacent to his own.

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He then resolved to transfer the establishment to Spain, and he directed the Comte de Frias, who was the right arm of all his plans, and who, remaining at Toulouse, kept him advised of all that passed there, to seek out a place more suitable for their purposes. The comte, well supplied with money for the purchase of some isolated mansion, upon the frontiers of Spain and France, left Toulouse on horseback with Don Jose, and as Giacomo had entrusted him with a considerable sum to place in the hands of François Gali, for the care which he took of his son, he stopped at the castle of the Baron de la Roque, whom he had met at the Princess of Puzzano's.

The Comte de Frias, after having been so imprudent as to inform the baron of the sums which he had with him, entered the chamber which had been prepared for him, laid aside his clothes and threw himself upon his bed; scarcely had he done this when he heard the door opened, beheld two men enter, and he received a poignard stroke, which fortunately glanced aside from his ribs; the pain and loss of blood deprived him of consciousness.

When his senses returned, he found himself in utter darkness. He rose and groped about him. The truth now flashed across his mind: it was evident that the Baron de la Roque, after having stabbed him in order to seize his treasures, had carried him to a vault, to remove all traces of the deed. He found that he had been enveloped in the sheets and coverings of his bed, which were probably stained with blood; the baron had believed him dead, doubtless, or perhaps he had judged it more prudent to complete his crime, by leaving him to perish with hunger in this vault.

The Comte de Frias, an associate in the adventurous life of Giacomo, had been thrown into situations of peril often enough to have had occasion to exercise the energy of his character; but what could he hope for in this vault, constructed as it was of thick walls, and closed by a stone gate, so massive as to prevent the loudest cries from reaching the ears of those without. More than twelve hours passed, bringing the comte no hope of relief from his horrible situation; and in this damp vault, cheered by no ray of light, these twelve hours seemed to him as many days.

At last, overcome with fatigue, he threw himself upon the ground; after some moments, he was surprised to feel a fresh and cold current of air stream through the fissures in the soil. He groped around with his hands, and soon found that he was lying upon a large flat slab, the edges of which, imperfectly joined to the stone frame-work that enclosed it, gave admission to this current.

Was this the opening to another vault beneath him? or was it the orifice of one of these abysses in which feudal lords were accustomed to bury the traces of their crimes? It was

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impossible for Frias to decide: but in a position so desperate as his, the least chance was welcome, and he resolved to essay it as a means of safety.

In the centre of this stone there was a large iron ring.—Through this ring he passed one of the coverings of his bed, and succeeded more than once in raising the stone from its place, but it fell back again as often as he slackened his efforts, in order to stoop and move it aside.

Applying himself, however, to his task, with wonderful perseverance, he placed over the joints of the stone fine grains of sand, in order that they might fall between its edges and the adjacent pavement, at the moment when he raised it, and thus prevent it from entirely resuming its original position.

By little and little, effort after effort, he was enabled to introduce into this interval, small particles of stone, and at last to slip his fingers beneath the slab, but at this moment he felt his strength leaving him. A universal weakness seized him, he suffered the first gnawings of hunger, and a heavy drowsiness began to overpower him.

The comte, wounded as he was, fatigued by his exertions, and by the want of nourishment, was aware that if he yielded to this drowsiness, instead of proving a refreshing repose, it would but deprive him of the little strength which remained to him. He rose with the energy of despair, and sensible that he was incapable of prolonged and patient efforts, he wound about his body the cloth which he had passed through the ring, and then started backward with all his strength; the stone was lifted from the orifice and completely displaced, but the comte, not expecting that it would yield so easily, tottered backward, and striking his head against the wall, he fell to the ground insensible.

Whether he swooned entirely, or whether the drowsiness which he had thus far resisted, overpowered him during his unconsciousness, he was never able to decide; but when his senses returned he had completely forgotten what had passed, so that upon rising and advancing at random in the darkness, he stepped into the orifice which had been left open by the removal of the stone, and the next moment he felt himself hanging in the air in a large circular hole, suspended by the cloth which he had wound about his body, and which still remained fastened to the iron ring. It was not until he was in this perilous position that he remembered what had occurred, and the efforts which he had made to escape from his confinement.

This was now practicable, perhaps, for, by tying together the coverings of his bed he might be enabled to decend to the bottom of this hole, which, doubtless, offered some way of egress, since he could hear the murmuring of water at a moderate depth beneath him, and when he glanced below he perceived

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a light, which could only proceed through some fissure that gave passage, doubtless, to the same. But the comte had not the strength to remount to the orifice of this well, and no other alternative seemed left him except to die thus suspended over the abyss, or to disengage himself from the cloth which supported him, and to end his sufferings by plunging into the waters below.

While in this fearful situation, the thought occurred to him that the lapse of time might have eaten some interstice in the walls of this well, by which he might perhaps, grapple and clamber down as upon a ladder. He gave an impulse, therefore, to the cloth, in order to swing toward the wall, and was greatly surprised at coming in contact with an obstacle which seemed to him like a bar of iron. He repeated this manœuvre, and touched it again, although he was unable to grasp it, as it was nearly upon a level with his feet. He gave himself a new impulse, and found a similar object behind him opposite his head; he seized it and perceived that it was a bar of iron, which descended spirally down the length of the wall. He placed himself astride of this bar, and discovering that it ran at a good distance from the wall, he conceived it to be the railing of a stairway, which descended to the bottom of this abyss.

This arrangement, which will doubtless surprise our readers, was sufficiently common in those castles, which had served for fortresses, and the comte at once felt that he was saved. The feudal mansions of the seigneurs of this province, reared, almost invariably, upon the heights which commanded the surrounding country, owed to their position a strength almost impregnable, at a time when the use of artillery was unknown. But this position exposed the occupants to a scarcity of water, and when they were invested with vigilance and perseverance, they were almost always obliged to surrender.

It was to obviate this difficulty, that, when the situation permitted, they dug immense wells, which opened upon some stream, and in some cases reached by subterranean vaults, to a neighbouring river. The castle of Carcassonne contained one of those wells: the towers of Foix still show the traces of a similar structure, which reached to the borders of the Arriége. The secret of the existence of these wells was transmitted from generation to generation, and there are examples of servants who have lived in these castles during a long life without suspecting the existence of these private passages.

Such a reservoir had been long useless to the castle of la Roque, which could not now be subjected to a siege, and for more than fifty years, the passage which led to the orifice of this huge well had remained closed.

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The comte extricated himself from the covering, to which he was still fastened, and found the stairway in a state of preservation which permitted him to descend with ease. He soon reached a kind of reservoir, in which he could wash his wound, and slake his thirst. He then began to look about for a way of escape, and discovered a succession of natural caverns, which conducted him at last to the spot from which the stream issued which supplied the reservoir: this spot he recognized as the one which we have described in a preceding chapter, and which was known by the name of the Wolf's Niche, a spot which was considered inaccessible. The comte, who had before visited this part of the country, recalled to mind the old tradition of the wolf which had been seen upon this platform; and he reflected that since this animal had appeared there, there must necessarily be some other way of egress from these excavations.

Frias resumed his researches, strengthened and encouraged by hope, and discovered at last a passage, which opened upon a hill side, so covered with holms and box trees, and so choked with briars, that it seemed impossible that either man or beast could have passed through it for many years.

The comte made his way through this passage, and hastened to conceal himself in the house of Francois Gali; the latter informed him of the report which the baron had spread abroad respecting his departure for the Indies, and the trust which had been confided to his hands. Reassured as to the safety of his son, the comte assumed one of those disguises which Giacomo had taught him to prepare, and reached Toulouse, where he recounted to the prince the adventure which had interrupted his journey.

Giacomo made him repeat, again and again his description of these numerous natural caverns, inquired after their extent, and then at last, replied:

'*Ma foi!* comte, your journey is at an end, and your money is far from being lost, for we have found that of which we were in search.'

'Do you intend, then,' said M. de Frias, 'to admit this wretch de la Roque into your confidence?'

'By no means,' rejoined the prince; 'the baron, with all the crimes that would bind him to us, has one failing that would induce me to reject him, were he ours by a hundred times more vices; he is a drunkard, and there is no security for a secret, whatever it may be, if confided to a man who at times loses his reason. Besides,' he added, 'what better safeguard can we have than the ignorance of the owner of the castle, and should he ever discover our secret, what surer means to silence him than to threaten him with the disclosure of his crime.'

We will not enter into more circumstantial details in order

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to inform the reader by what steadfast perseverance, by what extraordinary means, Giacomo succeeded in establishing in these caverns, the workshop of his fradulent coin, and the storehouse of his vast wealth. To this end he often enticed the baron from his castle, and it was during his absence, and after he had engaged the menials in some bacchanalian revel, that he was enabled to explore the mansion, and to discover various other secret passages which led to these caverns, of the existence of which the baron had not the slightest suspicion. This fact will explain the incessant supervision which the associates were enabled to exercise in the interior of the castle, and when in process of time, Don Jose had reached an age, at which he could be entrusted with the secret, his father found means to reveal himself to him, and thus secured a spy in the very bosom of the baron's household. It only remains to us now to explain the chance by which D'Auterive found himself entangled in this association, and the result of the ambitious hopes which Giacomo had so long nourished. This will be the subject of a new chapter, after which we shall resume the threads of this narrative, which, complicated as they were, were still held in the hands of a single man.

CHAPTER XXIX.

When Giacomo had at last found a retreat which was favourable to the accomplishment of his projects, he began to extend his relations with the most influential persons of the province. The reader will easily understand how he succeeded in inducing his brother-in-law, the Duke de Nevres, to join the association, how, strong in the ties which bound to him a number of accomplices, who, with the exception of a few, were unacquainted with each other, he had been enabled to profit by the secrets of some, and the passions of others to hold them all under his control. It was for this reason that, when consulted by Don Jose respecting his love for Paula, he had urged the youth to dare every thing; by this means he held in his power a woman, who, dwelling in the castle of la Roque, might become dangerous to him.

Giacomo had long since taken up his abode in the house of Gali under the name of Pastourel, and in the capacity of a shepherd, in order to watch the operations in which he was engaged, when Don Jose came to consult him as a skilful sorcerer. In truth, with the exception of Frias and old Gali, none of the associates of the mountain knew either who he really was, or the interest which he felt in their enterprise. He often repaired to the caverns where they were at work, but always in some disguise, which prevented him from being recognized by those who might afterwards meet him in his shepherd's garb.

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Don Jose, therefore, urged by certain insinuations from his father, imagined that he was merely consulting a village sorcerer, while he was unwittingly the instrument of a settled project. The reader is aware of the results, and the guilty Paula had been for two years the Baroness de la Roque, when D'Auterive paid a visit to the castle of his uncle and godfather. Paula was beautiful, and of an age so disproportioned to that of her husband, that D'Auterive expected little difficulty in tempting her from a fidelity that must be burdensome to her.

He made the trial, and was surprised to find himself repulsed.

Instead of viewing this resistance as the effect of rigid virtue, he attributed it to a passion which had anticipated his own; he watched her, and whether he saw more clearly or whether Don Jose's resentment at D'Auterive's attentions to Paula, rendered him less prudent in the presence of his rival, the young officer soon suspected the *liaison* which existed between his aunt and the baron's ward.

Although by no means of a malicious disposition, yet D'Auterive was greatly vexed that another should be preferred to him, and was seized with an unaccountable zeal for his godfather's honour, which he would not have hesitated to compromise for his own gratification, and he gave the two guilty ones very clearly to understand that he would constitute himself the avenger of the baron's wrongs.

The case was a serious one, and Don Jose, alarmed for himself, for his associates, and for Paula, imparted his fears to his father. But Pastourel was at hand, Pastourel, who by a strange tissue of circumstances held all their secrets in his hands, and who, even in the eyes of his most intimate confederates, appeared to be a being endowed with almost supernatural power. Pastourel was no sooner advised of this occurence, which might lead to the expulsion of their spy from the castle, than he traced out to Don Jose, through his father, the course which he had to pursue.

In obedience to the plan which was pointed out to him, Don Jose, feigning great alarm, persuaded Paula to meet him without the castle, and so contrived it that D'Auterive should suspect their design and be induced to follow them.

All happened as Pastourel had foreseen. After nightfall D'Auterive followed Paula as she left the castle, and at the moment when she was joined by Don Jose, who drew her rapidly onward, and D'Auterive was on the point of pursuing them, he was suddenly seized, bound, gagged, and carried to a considerable distance. Here he found himself surrounded by five or six masked men who put various questions to him; he answered like a man of courage, but they threatened him with death, and when they explained to him the conditions

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by which he could save his life, he seemed disposed to accede to them.

In this state of things, Pastourel, concealed by a disguise, unknown even to his associates, enacted one of those scenes which concurred to strengthen their opinion that he was possessed of some supernatural power. At the moment when they were about to explain more fully to D'Auterive the conditions which would be required of him, Pastourel took up the word, and said:

'This man has belonged to us from the day of his birth, and the hour for his initiation has arrived.'

'I belong to myself alone,' said D'Auterive, 'and to the service of the king, my master.'

'Open this doublet,' said Pastourel, 'and see if he does not wear upon his breast a piece of gold which proves that he is ours.'

This command was obeyed, and the piece of gold was found which Giacomo, more than twenty years ago had given to D'Auterive's nurse, and which the young man had preserved on account of the superstitious virtue which she had attributed to it.

'Read the sacred words which are inscribed thereon,' said Pastourel.

The Comte de Frias, who was present at this scene, read with unfeigned astonishment, the Arabian characters which signified:

'*Speech is silver, but silence is gold.*'

D'Auterive stood amazed, while Pastourel resumed:

'Is it thus you have been taught them, young man?'

'It is,' replied D'Auterive with an air of stupifaction.

'And they should have added, that when you heard these words uttered near you, fortune would not be far distant.'

'It is true!' said the young officer.

'Set him at liberty,' rejoined Pastourel, 'he is ours. I have predestined him to a high fortune, but like the rest of us he must sign with his own hand the deed of our association, for he must be saved or lost with us.'

'Notwithstanding his alarm, and the astonishment with which he viewed this man, who recalled to his memory a circumstance which had so long been forgotten, D'Auterive refused to sign before knowing to what he pledged himself.

'You pledge yourself to silence,' said Giacomo, 'and to aid to the utmost of your power, the man, who, under whatever circumstances, shall remind you of the motto inscribed upon this piece of gold.'

D'Auterive still insisted upon knowing the designs of those to whose power he was thus about to subject himself. Giacomo now explained to him that he was in the presence of a society of counterfeiters, and his comrades testified some surprise at

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the strange imprudence of their chief. Still D'Auterive obstinately refused to yield, and the associates saw themselves compelled to secure their safety by a crime at which all recoiled. But Giacomo, raising his voice exclaimed:

'He will sign, I say!'

Then approaching D'Auterive, he said, in an under tone:

'Madman that you are, child of my choice and protection, it becomes you well, you, whom I have destined from birth to an exalted fortune, to refuse to sign this deed! It becomes you well to hesitate, when led by forbidden curiosity, you have placed our secret in peril!'

'What curiosity?' said D'Auterive.

'Have you not come hither as a spy upon the meeting of Don Jose de Frias with the Baroness de la Roque?'

'I should think,' replied D'Auterive, 'that my uncle's honour interests me more than any one else.'

'And do you think,' said Giacomo, speaking in a still lower tone, 'that the honour of the duke De Nevres interests no one, and have you imagined, you, the lover of Leonore of Puzzano, duchess De Nevres, that you could not be punished, as you wish to punish this Don Jose?'

This revelation completed D'Auterive's dismay.

'Whence know you this?' he muttered.

'I know all,' said Giacomo, sign—it is to save more than your life—it is to save the honour of a woman who has entrusted her happiness to your keeping.'

D'Auterive signed the deed, and Giacomo's associates, who were in possession of those secrets only which he was willing they should penetrate, were not less astonished than the young officer at the strange influence which this man exerted over all around him.

The reader is now informed of the manner in which D'Auterive was placed in the power of the counterfeiters: he is acquainted with the means by which they were enabled to enact that nocturnal scene in which they forced the baron to obey their commands, and in which they succeeded in securing Barati's silence, by recalling to his memory that date and that word which had so greatly terrified him.

If, in addition to this, the reader will remember that the danger with which the councillor was threatened, was averted by Pastourel's intervention, who forced the duke to silence, and protected at once Leonore, the baron de la Roque, D'Auterive, and all those whose safety was compromised, he will understand the sway which he held over this association. It will be remembered also that it was he who announced the burning of the castle of La Roque, a deed which had been committed by Galidou at his instigation, and we must explain the reasons which prompted him to destroy an establishment to build up which he had devoted the best part of his life.

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On the one hand, the attention of the parliament of Toulouse had been so thoroughly aroused, that it seemed certain that a decree would be passed, directing a perquisition at the castle of La Roque, and when once a body of soldiers were quartered within its walls, the slightest accident might lead them to the caverns in which Giacomo had stored his treasures. On the other hand, at the time when this danger revealed itself, these treasures were amply sufficient for our adventurer for the hopes which he had so long nourished, and to the accomplishment of which he had devoted so much toil and patience, had vanished.

It is well known to what a state of weakness and poverty France had fallen during the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV. Money was scarce, and was sought for on all sides, and by all methods; loans were difficult to obtain from the difficulty of finding securities, so that it may easily be imagined that a man who offered a sum of nearly twenty millions of livres, and upon a simple condition which he held in reserve until the conclusion of the negociation, would meet with a ready hearing. This man was the prince of Puzzano; he appeared at the moment when Villars, seizing, in quick succession, Spire, Worms, and Landau, seemed destined to restore to the aged monarch the brilliant triumphs of his youth; but these triumphs had drained the last resources of the state, and notwithstanding her new victories, France, almost incapable of pursuing them, was destined to lose the fruits which they should have produced to her.

In the negociations which followed the peace of Rastadt for partitioning Europe anew, the prince of Puzzano imagined that France would have a preponderating voice, and at his suggestion, the ministers of Louis demanded Sardinia. Giacomo had engaged, as soon as it was conceded to France, to purchase that island, for the sum of thirty millions. England opposed this arrangement, however, and the kingdom of Naples with Sardinia was given to Austria.

All that the prince of Puzzano could now obtain, was the promise of a restoration to his rank, and impunity for the crime by which he had amassed his wealth, an impunity for which he must pay an enormous price.

Such were the explanations which he gave to the Duke de Nevres, his brother-in-law, and to the baron De la Roque, during the secret interview which followed the scene in which he consigned to the flames the deed of their association.

But the prince, fallen from his lofty hopes, was unwilling to accept a restoration, a public one at least, as the price of so many efforts, and of a life devoted to so much toil. In his eye it was scarcely worth the while, for so feeble a satisfaction to draw the eyes of the world upon his past life, and upon the

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path which he had pursued to reach his aim. The restoration of his rights and titles, obtained by the secret intervention of France, was an affair that did not excite the least noise, and he had reaped no other advantage from it than the recognition of Galidou as the son of the prince of Puzzano, with the title of Marquis of Veroni, a title which, as such, rightfully belonged to him. Both then disappeared from Languedoc, and it was not until long after that they returned to find themselves in the presence of the same persons with whom they had been thrown in contact fifteen years before. These persons were D'Auterive, the baron De la Roque, Barati, Clemence, Galidou, the duchess De Nevres, Paula, all of whom indeed we have already introduced to the reader, and whose histories we will conclude in the following chapters.

CHAPTER XXX.

The reader will recollect, we hope so at least, that we commenced the narrative of the life of that man, who was known to them only under the name of Pastourel, at the moment when the baron had excited Bernard's suspicions against Charlotte. On the same day, it will be remembered, the Comte D'Auterive, his wife, an unknown old man, whom Catharine had met on her way to the ruins, were to repair thither to consult the Solitary, Pastourel. Charlotte purposed to come accompanied by Don Jose, who was concealed under the name of Vasconcellos, and the marquis of Veroni had been summoned thither by his father.

In all this the sole question, as it seemed, was the marriage of the son of the duke De Nevres with Charlotte De la Roque; but more than one interest, more than one passion opposed this marriage, and it was these passions and these interests which led all these persons into the presence of that man, by whose aid they expected to gratify them. By a singular coincidence, all those who had advised Pastourel of their intention to visit him, had fixed upon eight o'clock in the evening. Charlotte alone, was to come in the day time, and we will accompany her first on her way thither. It was scarcely five o'clock when she stole from her father's castle. Jose or Vasconcellos awaited her at a little distance, and they soon reached the almost deserted road which led to the ruins. But Bernard had not forgotten the baron's perfidious insinuations, and, disguised as a peasant, he had stationed himself in the environs of the old castle, and soon beheld Charlotte and Vasconcellos advancing rapidly towards him. The anxious face of the maiden, the quickness of her movements, announced some violent agitation; Vasconcellos spoke to her with earnest gesticulations; he seemed to entreat her with the ardour of a man impelled by some violent pas-

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sion. Charlotte, appeared undecided, and in the eyes of a jealous lover her hesitation could only be explained by a remnant of the affection for him, which still resisted, but was upon the point of yielding.

They now made their way amid the ruins, and entered the retreat of Pastourel. Bernard, for a moment, thought of following them and listening to their conversation, but he knew by experience that Pastourel kept a sentinel near him which suffered no one to approach his master without warning him, and that his dog Grey-foot would announce his arrival, even if he did not prevent it. He resolved, therefore, not to enter the ruins, but he took his station behind some bushes, so that he could overhear the conversation of Charlotte and Don Jose on their return, and then follow them stealthily, or stop them as they passed him.

We, who have no reason to prevent us, will accompany them upon this visit. When they entered the presence of Pastourel, the latter received them as he had received Bernard, absorbed apparently in the perusal of a book, which engaged all his attention, an occupation which he allowed the entrance of no one to disturb. The habit which he had contracted of placing his life and actions in a striking, and as we may say, theatrical point of view, influenced his conduct when he least thought of it, and although he had long passed the age when he took delight in exciting wonder in the minds of those with whom he came in contact, yet he retained unwittingly something of the charlatan, even on those occasions which he considered as serious, and this was one of the number. The question which now interested him was, whether he should consent or not to the marriage of Charlotte and his nephew Bernard. To a man like Pastourel, inequality of rank and fortune, were no motives for hesitation, but he had promised Leonore to watch over her son, and to secure his happiness, and he wished to judge of Charlotte's character, for he knew her only from public rumour, which described her as an angel of virtue, and from the extravagant eulogiums of Bernard.

Charlotte gazed at first with curiosity at the place in which she found herself, and endeavoured to recal some remembrances of her childhood. She recognized this hall, in which she had often seen her father's domestics engaged in their rude sports, and she said in a low voice to Don Jose:

'The conflagration has not effaced all the hateful remembrances of this abode.'

Pastourel overheard her, and gazed upon her, while she cast a disdainful glance around her. This scrutiny was unfavourable to Charlotte. It was in this house that she was born, it was in this house that she had received the warm caresses of a mother, who loved her with that passion and

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that remorse which a woman always feels for the child of her guilt. Charlotte seemed to wait impatiently until Pastourel could listen to her, and he took pleasure in prolonging her suspense. She then said to Don Jose:

'Does not this man intend to notice us? I cannot be long absent.'

Don Jose, by a sign, directed Charlotte to be silent, but Pastourel said:

'You are wrong, Don Jose, to wish to calm your daughter's impatience; it convinces me that she is more disposed to yield to your wishes than you imagine.'

At these words Charlotte's features assumed that mild expression which served so well to conceal from all eyes her want of feeling, and she replied in a tone of compassion:

'The few words which have passed your lips, old man, are so severe, that the purpose of my visit here seems accomplished; I already know all that I came to learn.'

'No, Charlotte,' replied Pastourel, 'you do not know the purpose of your visit here, and the words which have passed my lips have told you nothing.'

'It is true,' said Charlotte, 'M. De Frias has already told me.'

'Do not take the trouble to inform me of that which Frias has told you, young maiden; I know it. He has told you of his *liason* with your mother; he has told you that you are not the heiress of the baron De la Roque, and the remembrances of your childhood are not so entirely effaced, but that you are sensible that he has spoken the truth. But I will tell you wherefore you have come hither. Listen carefully, for I shall say that of your father which it does not become him to say to you. When your mother, the unfortunate Paula, retired to a convent, and left you in the hands of the baron de la Roque, Don Jose took a vow to repair towards the child the misfortunes which he had brought upon the mother. He was unable to fulfil his promise at once, for he left France under the conviction that he had committed murder.'

Charlotte started, and gazed upon Don Jose with astonishment.

'Do not gaze thus at your father, young maiden, this crime had been required of him by your mother, to save her honour, and yours also, and you have no right to blame him when his intended victim has pardoned him.'

'He has pardoned him!' said Charlotte, scarcely able to repress her indignation at the peremptory tone in which Pastourel addressed her.

'I have pardoned him, I say,' replied Pastourel, 'for I know how to pardon those who are led astray by violent passions; I know the weakness of a heart that burns with love,

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but I am without pity for those who are governed by no emotion but cold selfishness, for those whose every action is guided by calculating hypocrisy; and these, let them clothe the baseness of their souls with all the show of virtue, yet my eye pierces through the disguise and I cannot pardon them.'

As Pastourel uttered these words, he gazed in Charlotte's face with an expression so significant, that she turned pale, and addressing Don Jose, she exclaimed:

'You, who call yourself my father, have you brought me here to be insulted?'

'Charlotte,' cried Don Jose, 'he who has spoken to you has been your protector during my absence; it was he, who, by a power which he alone can wield, has thwarted the designs of the baron de la Roque; you owe him gratitude, you owe him respect. And besides, why do you apply these words to yourself? they can in no wise refer to you.'

'Because she has read her own character in these words,' said Pastourel.

'Monseigneur!' cried Don Jose, impatiently.

'Monseigneur!' echoed Charlotte in amazement.

'He has kept his promise; he has not told you who I am, and I thank him for it; and as a proof of the interest which I take in his welfare, I advise you to retire, Charlotte, for it does not become me to destroy the last hope of the son of that man, who until his death, was my most faithful and devoted friend.'

'You are severe, Monseigneur,' said Don Jose, 'and I know not why my daughter has incurred your displeasure.'

'You know, at least, why she has come to consult me. It is concerning her marriage with Bernard, to which you are opposed, and to which she seems greatly inclined. You form your opinion of Bernard, as I form mine of Charlotte. In your eyes he is violent, harsh, capricious, and certain to render your daughter wretched, and you are so firmly convinced of this, that you have long been persuading Charlotte to renounce him. But, notwithstanding all your counsels, she persists in encouraging her suitor, for the daughter of the baron de la Roque could scarcely aspire to an alliance with the house of De Nevres.'

Charlotte, who had been rendered more circumspect, since she had heard Pastourel addressed by the title of Monseigneur, replied with feigned humility:

'Such an alliance is highly honourable, doubtless, but sentiments more noble than pride, perhaps, render it precious to me.'

'You know that Bernard is poor, for the immense fortune of his mother has been squandered by the duke.'

'I know it,' said Charlotte.

'Do you know also, that if you contract this marriage, Don

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Jose can bestow upon you none of that vast wealth he possesses in Spain, for thanks to my care, his entire fortune consists in lands which he cannot alienate.'

'I know it,' said Charlotte.

'Do you know also, that if you consent to follow him, to leave this country, to go to live with him in Spain, you may become the wealthiest heiress in the kingdom, and aspire to an alliance with the most powerful Princess?'

'Is this true?' said Charlotte, who had listened to Pastourel with restless and eager curiosity.

'Yes, it is true,' replied Pastourel, 'and now that you are sure of it, you can choose the latter, if you will.'

'Now that I am sure of it,' said Charlotte in a sad tone, 'sure that Don Jose is my father, now that I am convinced that nothing in this country can rightfully belong to me, neither the name nor the heritage of the baron de la Roque, I will submit to my destiny, I will follow my father wherever it shall please him to lead me, and I promise him all the devotion, all the gratitude, all the care by which I had hoped to bend at last the man whose name I bear.'

'Ah!' cried Don Jose, 'come my daughter, come my Charlotte, and may heaven's blessing rest upon you, monseigneur; you have put an end to her irresolution, and given to my solitary lot a companion, a friend, a daughter!'

'Go, then,' said Pastourel,' and may God protect you!'

Charlotte and Don Jose left the hall, and Pastourel remained alone, sunk in reflection.

'I am as fond and foolish as he,' he muttered, 'he puts faith in the virtues of this maiden, and imagines that she follows him because she loves him; and I, have not I imagined, that in my son I should find a heart which would console me, and notwithstanding all the silly vanity which characterizes him, I have summoned him this evening, in the hope of exciting in his bosom a feeling of affection and tenderness, which might cheer me in my solitude. Alas! he is like this Charlotte, he calculates what portion of my wealth he may obtain, and is obedient only from interest. It is the punishment of those who have abandoned their children to the care of strangers.

In the meanwhile Charlotte and Don Jose had left the castle, and reached the borders of the torrent. Bernard had concealed himself at the place where he supposed they would separate, and where they would probably pause for a moment to exchange a few parting words. He had not deceived himself. Scarcely had they reached a spot where the road branched off in two directions, when the man who was known to Bernard, under the name of Vasconcellos, said, hurriedly:

'At midnight, then—at the garden gate.'

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'I will be there,' said Charlotte.

'I shall have two horses close at hand, and we can reach the frontiers of Spain before daybreak.

'Yes, yes,' replied Charlotte, 'but let us hasten!'

'And then,' resumed Don Jose, 'you will have nothing more to fear, Charlotte; then you will be under my protection, and neither Bernard nor the Baron de la Roque will be able to tear you from my arms.'

Don Jose embraced his daughter, and left her. Charlotte remained motionless for a moment, and then, as if hurried away by the thought, exclaimed:

'Yes, yes, I will go with him!'

Bernard had heard all. He did not attempt to stop her; but as if in answer to the words which had just broken from her lips, he muttered with fury:

'No, no, you shall not go with him, Charlotte, for I will slay him first! But I have taken an oath to the baron; I have promised to tell him all. He may punish Charlotte, for he has the right, but he shall not dispute with me that of chastising my rival.'

An hour afterwards, he resumed his own apparel, and presented himself before the baron, where he found Charlotte, busied with her needlework.

In the interval, Pastourel received those whose intended visits had been announced by Catharine, and after having described them to the reader, we will inform him of the result of Charlotte's resolution and of Bernard's discovery.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was evening, and the darkness was fast increasing. It was already difficult to distinguish persons or objects when the Comte D'Auterive reached the retreat of Pastourel. The comte was not a man to tremble in the presence of another, and still as he approached this mysterious personage a feeling of awe oppressed his bosom which he could not entirely subdue. Pastourel observed it; he was flattered by it, and while the Comte examined him with attention, he said:

'Yes, I am indeed the man whom you seek, Comte D'Auterive; the man, who fifteen years ago, at the house of Vergnes, saved you and your accomplices from a danger at which the boldest trembled.'

'I recognise you perfectly,' said the comte, 'your name is Pastourel.'

'You have sent to request an interview with me, to what end?'

'You pass for a sorcerer, master Pastourel,' replied D'Auterive, in a tone which he tried to render sarcastic, but which

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was evidently constrained; 'you ought to know what brings me here.'

The visage of the old man grew dark, and he answered with some sternness:

'I thought that I was speaking with a serious man, and on a serious business; but if you prefer dealing with a sorcerer, I will tell you why you have come.'

As Pastourel said this, he took the lamp which burned near him and placed it so that its rays fell directly upon the comte's features, which he examined with extreme attention.

'Must I reach you my hand,' said D'Auterive, 'that you may read its lines?'

'The face of a man,' replied Pastourel, 'is an open book, in which I have long since learned to read, and yours tells me sad secrets.'

These words, and the glance that accompanied them, disturbed D'Auterive.

'Enough of charlatanry, good fellow,' he said, 'I have no time to waste.'

'In that case,' said Pastourel, in an icy tone, 'what would you with me?'

'You well know,' replied D'Auterive, with a gesture of vexation.

From the evident reluctance of the comte to declare the intention of his visit, Pastourel divined that he had not come to consult him openly and frankly upon the mission with which he was entrusted. Instead of answering, he gazed upon him in silence, and said sadly, as if he had been alone:

'And still I have known him as a hair-brained, careless man, scattering gold, braving danger, displaying that ready generosity which seduces even those who blame it, and he now stands before me absorbed in a base and sordid passion.'

'Enough of moralizing, good fellow!—despatch!' cried the comte.

'And with what shall I despatch, Comte D'Auterive?' rejoined Pastourel, in a lofty tone. 'I myself have no time to waste in waiting upon your hesitation. Speak, then, or begone! What would you of me?'

'I have promised to visit you, old sorcerer,' said D'Auterive, with a constrained laugh, 'and I know how ready you are to assume the airs of an important personage; he who sends me has warned me of your silly pretensions. I excuse your rudeness, therefore. I am here on the part of the Duke de Nevres.'

'Well, then,' rejoined Pastourel, 'what has the Duke de Nevres told you?'

D'Auterive, who had remained silent for a moment, in hopes that Pastourel would assist him to deliver his message, was at last obliged to answer.

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'He has directed me to speak to you of the marriage of his son, the Marquis de Velay with Mademoiselle de la Roque.'

The comte paused again, but Pastourel, with his eyes fixed upon his face, still listened, and at last replied slowly:

'Speak of it, Comte D'Auterive: I hearken!'

'You know now the object of my visit; I wait to hear your opinion.'

'You have been directed to speak to me of the marriage of Bernard with Charlotte,' said Pastourel. 'I know that you have just told me so, but why, for what end can you have been sent to me?'

'It seems to me,' said D'Auterive, 'that I have just told you that I was waiting for your opinion."

'As to what?'

'As to the propriety of permitting or preventing the marriage.'

'And if I think that it should not take place?' said Pastourel.

'It shall not take place,' said D'Auterive, quickly.

'Ah,' said Pastourel, 'and if on the contrary, I think it is advantageous and necessary?'

'I cannot see its advantage and necessity,' said D'Auterive.

'That is not the question, sir; what would be done in that case?'

The comte contracted his lips, and Pastourel, in a tone slightly marked with scorn, added:

'Comte D'Auterive, the Duke de Nevres has told you that he would refer the question of this marriage to my sole decision; you have in your pocket a written paper, which authorises you to consent if I permit it—to oppose it if I refuse; and you are not here to ask my opinion, but for my orders.'

'Since you are so well informed, sir,' rejoined the comte, 'it was scarcely worth the while to wait for me to speak.'

'I wished to have your opinion upon this marriage.'

'I do not see how it interests me.'

'I am a man to whom one may speak plainly,' rejoined Pastourel; 'in the first place, because it is not easy to conceal anything from me, and secondly, because I have reached an age when there are few passions which I do not comprehend, and cannot pardon. You do not wish this marriage to take place.'

'And why so, if you please?' replied D'Auterive.

'Because you think that the son of the Duke de Nevres would degrade himself by espousing the daughter of the Baron De la Roque.'

'And would it be so very wonderful if I thought thus?' said D'Auterive.

'So much the less, wonderful,' said Pastourel, [illegible]

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not without a suspicion that Charlotte is not the daughter of the Baron de la Roque?'

D'Auterive gazed inquisitively at Pastourel, and said, in a whisper:

'Do you know it also?'

'Perhaps well enough to give you proof of it.'

'Indeed!' said D'Auterive, leaning towards Pastourel.

'Yes, yes,' replied the latter, and you will see what an admirable two-edged sword this proof would become in your hands. Bernard would not wed Charlotte; and the Baron de la Roque knowing certainly that Charlotte is not his daughter, would turn her from his doors—would disinherit her; and you Comte D'Auterive, the baron's nephew and godson, would become heir to all his wealth. It would be a game well played, would it not, worthy comte?'

D'Auterive was unable to control a violent gesture of anger at this insinuation, and darting a threatening glance at Pastourel, he said:

'If you were better acquainted with the man with whom you are speaking, I would make you repent your words; but I pardon your insolent inuendoes.'

'Enough of bravado!' said Pastourel. 'Such is your aim.'

'And if it were so?' rejoined D'Auterive, 'would it not be just to expel the illegitimate child from the place which she usurps?'

'Do you think so, sir?' said Pastourel, 'and her mother, whose disgrace must follow hers?'

'She will suffer the punishment of her guilt—this also is just.'

At this reply, Pastourel rose, and speaking as if he were alone, he said:

'Oh, brave Chevalier D'Auterive! where are you? where is the gallant lover who would fain have silenced the Duke de Nevres, when the latter surprised him with his wife in the house of the innkeeper Vergnes?'

'Be silent, sir!' exclaimed D'Auterive, 'and respect the woman whose secret has fallen, I know not how, into your possession.'

'And why should you ask me to conceal your secrets, when you are so ready to divulge those of others? No, no, Comte D'Auterive; justice is the same for every one; you have just pronounced two weighty truths—that an illegitimate child should not usurp the place of a rightful heir, and that a woman who has erred should be branded with public infamy. I am of your opinion, and—'

At this moment Greyfoot uttered a low growl, and Pastourel paused; he then added:

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'And here comes some one, probably, who will agree with you also.'

'Who?' said D'Auterive.

'Step yonder, behind that tapestry, M. D'Auterive, and you will see what reason you have to preach these strict precepts of morality.'

Prompted by an impulse of curiosity, D'Auterive obeyed, and a moment after his wife entered the hall. She appeared trembling, agitated, and at once said:

'Some one follows me; I am terrified. Beware!'

Greyfoot leaped up barking, and sprang towards the door.

'Down, cried Pastourel, 'down! if it is a foe, we are strong enough to receive him.'

He had scarcely uttered these words, when a new comer threw open the door with violence, and closed it behind him. This man was armed; and before Madame D'Auterive had time to cry out, Pastourel said:

'Enter, Barati, enter! I have long expected this interview.'

'Ha! you have not forgotten what I promised you!' said Barati, whose dress, and the livid paleness of whose features, convinced Pastourel that he was the stranger whose visit had been announced by Catharine.

'I forget nothing, Barati,' replied Giacomo; 'and I remember that you promised to avenge yourself for the injuries which I have heaped upon you. The occasion is a fair one, and you can avail yourself of it.'

'What brings you here, Clemence?' said Barati, to his daughter; 'what have you come to seek of this man?'

'I have come to ask his advice, father,' replied Clemence; 'and I am astonished to find you here, when my husband and I left you at Paris.'

'Begone from this den, my daughter,' said Barati; 'this is no place for you.'

'No, no,' said Pastourel, 'those who enter here cannot leave until I permit them. This door will be opened only to admit a man whom you have forgotten, Barati, but still one whom you know.'

'Do not think to terrify me with your jugglery, and your prophetic airs,' said the ex-councillor; 'we know each other.'

'Without doubt,' said Pastourel: 'and you know what every encounter with me has cost you.'

'This one will be the last,' rejoined Barati, with an air of ferocity. 'Begone, Clemence, begone!'

'I have told you that she cannot. As for you, do not agitate yourself, old madman; a single movement to attack me—a single signal from my eye—and that dog, who lies at my feet, will drag you to the earth, and throttle you like a child.'

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The old councillor shook his head, and replied, in a solemn tone:

'Neither your audacity and address, nor the activity and teeth of your dog, will save you now. He who has resolved to give his life for the life of his foe, is stronger than you think.'

'In that case, Master Barati, you are about to strike a good blow for one who is very dear to you, if you have indeed formed this noble resolution. Oh, I can see the radiant smile of that son-in-law, who thinks that you have lived too long, and who already counts, in his imagination, the treasures which you will leave behind you.'

'Be it so; it matters not,' said Barati, 'and I would double these treasures, if he could aid me in chastising you.'

'I believe him capable of doing so, if he could hear you,' said Giacomo; 'but the game would cost him too dear.'

'Let him lose or gain by it,' said Barati, 'all that I can tell you,' he added, drawing a pistol from beneath his mantle, 'is that your hour has come, Giacomo.'

'My father!' cried Clemence, throwing herself in his way, 'would you commit murder?'

'Spare yourself useless prayers, said Giacomo, coldly; 'this man cares little for you; this man is not your father.'

'Is not my father?' cried Clemence.

'No he is not your father; and to-morrow, if he slays me—to-morrow the family of Lostanges, which holds in its hands the proofs of this assertion—to-morrow this family will chase from the heritage of this man—I will not say the illegitimate child—but the child which was purchased, in order to plunder the wealth of his father-in-law, and the Comtesse D'Auterive will be recognised as the daughter of the innkeeper Vergnes.'

'My father! my father!' cried Clemence, 'tell him that he lies.'

'It is true;' said Barati, in a tone of increasing gloom, 'but perish thy fortune and thy name rather than my vengeance! Listen, Prince of Puzzano! when D'Auterive informed me that he was about to visit this province, on account of the marriage of Bernard de Velay; when he informed me that the duke had directed him to submit the matter to the direction of an unknown Solitary, who lived concealed in these ruins, I know not what instinct of hatred admonished me that you were this man, for I have not forgotten you for a single hour: I thought that I should find you here. To whom else, in truth, than to the man who has made and unmade his fortune, could he refer such a decision? I have come then, and you must know for what I have undertaken the journey.'

'To slay me,' said Giacomo, laughing. 'You call that vengeance; I will teach you a better; I will show you true

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to take revenge. Comte D'Auterive,' cried Pastourel, with a loud voice, 'come forth!

D'Auterive obeyed; he seemed violently agitated, and Clemence, whom the strangeness of the scene had rendered dumb, was still more astonished, when, at the bidding of Pastourel, she beheld her husband appear like a phantom. Barati also seemed startled at this apparition.

Comte D'Auterive,' said Pastourel, 'you now know who I am, and you can easily imagine my power. Listen carefully therefore. Your wife, as you have just heard, is not the daughter of this man. To avenge himself upon me, he has not hesitated an instant at the disclosure of a secret, which would deprive you of the wealth which he has amassed by his past venality and his present avarice. Here then a fortune is escaping from your grasp. On the other hand, but a word from me, and you would lose the inheritance of the baron de la Roque by the marriage of his daughter with Bernard de Velay. Well, then, I will insure you the heritage of Barati, and the heritage of the baron, but you will at once disarm that wretch, bind him, drag him hence, and in eight days, let him be confined in a madhouse upon your testimony and that of your wife's."

D'Auterive hesitated, and Clemence, from whose bosom the secret which had just been revealed to her, had not entirely effaced her respect and the affection for one whom she had been accustomed to consider as her father, exclaimed:

'You will not obey, M. D'Auterive!'

Barati thought he was about to triumph, and raised his pistol, but at that period this weapon was clumsily made, and difficult to discharge, and the old councillor had not yet cocked it, when D'Auterive, profiting by this act of violence, to cloak his interposition with an honourable pretext, wrested the pistol from the hands of his father-in-law, and said:—

'You shall not commit murder!'

Barati, thus disarmed, uttered a cry of fury:

'Oh!' he exclaimed, 'do you turn against me? It is well! it is well! it is not he who will disclose the secret; it is I.'

'It is impossible!' cried Clemence.

'Beware!' said D'Auterive, in a gloomy tone.

'I have told you, comte,' said Pastourel, 'there is but one way to succeed with this obstinate old man. He must leave this hall for the madhouse, otherwise he will ruin you both.'

'Clemence! Clemence!' cried Barati, 'if you are not my daughter, yet I have always treated you with the tenderness and love of a father.'

Madam D'Auterive was agitated by terrible and contending emotions, and if she had yielded to the mere impulse of her heart, it is probable that she would have interposed to save the old man without listening to promptings of self-interest,

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but Pastourel approached her, and said in a low and hurried voice:

'If the daughter of Vergnes will not renounce Barati, the mistress of Bernard de Velay must do it.'

Madam D'Auterive cast a bewildered glance upon Pastourel, while Barati exclaimed:

'Clemence, you will proclaim the violence they have done to me; your word will suffice to confound them, unless they kill you likewise. You are the child of my heart, if not of my blood.'

Clemence still hesitated with her eyes fixed upon Pastourel.

'Is it necessary,' said the latter, 'that I should command where I have deigned to advise?'

'Clemence!' cried Barati, clasping his arms about her.

'You are not my father!' exclaimed Clemence, extricating herself from his embrace.

As if stricken by lightning Barati sunk upon a seat.

'Here Comte,' said Pastourel, to D'Auterive, 'here is my dog's chain, it will serve to bind your father-in-law.'

There was so much contempt in the tone in which Pastourel addressed him, that D'Auterive felt ashamed at the part which he was playing, and he replied with a feeling of pride:

'I was willing to save your life, sir, but you cannot expect me to aid you in this infamous act.'

'Ah!' cried Barati, starting up suddenly with savage joy, 'you are deceived for once Prince of Puzzano, and you will pay, at last, the penalty of your crimes.'

'You see, the man is mad,' said Pastourel, turning to D'Auterive, 'he looks to you for aid, and he forgets that if I die without suppressing the proof of your wife's origin, she is disinherited as well as you. He is mad, I say; but for that I should endeavour to make him understand that he ought to be silent.'

'Wretch!' cried Barati, rushing furiously upon Giacomo.

Barati's despair checked D'Auterive. In truth, it was so odious a deed to lay hands upon a crushed and desolate old man, that the comte had shrunk from it, but this new outbreak banished his hesitation. D'Auterive rushed upon Barati to arrest him; a struggle ensued, and when it was over, Barati lay bound with the dog's chain.

The prince had gazed motionless upon this scene, but if Barati's cries, and if the noise of the struggle had not drowned his voice, he might have been heard to mutter:

'Oh, the corruption and baseness of mankind! What an inexhaustible source of power to him who knows how to employ them!'

Scarcely was Barati reduced to a state of helplessness, when a new personage appeared at the entrance of the hall.

This personage was Galidou, or the marquis of Veroni; he

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paused for a moment upon the threshold to gaze at the spectacle before him. Clemence had taken refuge in a corner of this vast hall; the Comte D'Auterive, who had been hurried away by the ardour of the struggle, stood motionless, ashamed of his victory, as he beheld Barati bound at his feet; Pastourel was contemplating his old enemy, not with the joy of a victor, but with disgust at the victory which he had gained, and at the means by which he had attained it.

'Enter, enter, Marquis of Veroni!' said Pastourel. 'Be not astonished at this spectacle; they are prudent children, and wish to prevent the sad consequences of their father's madness.'

'Ah, ha!' said the marquis, 'it is your father then, my fair comtesse! it is your father-in-law, my dear comte! it is Barati! This castle does not bring him good fortune; this is the second time that he has set foot in it; the first to be cast into a dungeon, the second to be chained like a dog.'

'I beg you to believe, marquis,' said D'Auterive, with an air of confusion, 'that we have been forced to this act of violence. Unfortunately, M. Barati's reason is failing with age, and he pushes his extravagance to such a degree that he does not recognise his own daughter.'

While D'Auterive spoke, Barati slowly raised his head, and gazed at Veroni with an air of curiosity. Clemence, ashamed at what had passed, hastened to say:

'Alas! M. Veroni, my father's madness is so great that he has made an attempt upon the life of this venerable old man.'

'It is enough to send you to the gallows, old maniac!' cried Veroni with that rude and careless tone which he mistook for lordliness. 'What the d———l have you against this venerable old man, as the fair comtesse calls him? You are not acquainted with each other that I know of?'

'I know him, as I know you, Galidou,' said Barati.

The new marquis started at his name and cried in a boisterous tone:

'What? what is that? Galidou!'

'It is you! you!' said Barati.

'Compel your good father to keep silence, fair comtesse. I see plainly that he is mad, thoroughly mad!'

'No, no,' said Pastourel, in a grave tone; 'let him speak.'

All gazed at the speaker in surprise, and he added:

'It is well that all present should be convinced of his madness. Speak, Barati, speak! did you not say that you recognised this man?'

'Was I wrong in giving him the name he bore, when he entered this castle with me for the first time?'

'No, Barati,' said Pastourel 'you were right.'

'How, sir?' cried Veroni.

'And now,' added Barati, 'when I hear him styled Marquis

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of Veroni; am I wrong in recognizing him as the child of that crime for which I am here to punish you?'

'No, you are not wrong, Barati; it is he, whom, forty years ago, you sent to Vergnes, and whom I carried thence.'

'And you have given him the title of Marquis of Veroni?'

'You have heard.'

'And you have acknowledged him as your son?' rejoined Barati.

'Yes,' said Pastourel; 'he whom you cast from your house, as unworthy to bear the name of Barati, will at my death be Prince of Puzzano.'

At these words Barati laughed scornfully, and replied:

'Unless your death occurs on the instant, he will neither be Prince of Puzzano nor Marquis of Veroni.'

Giacomo seemed agitated at these words, and Galidou exclaimed:

'What mean you, wretch?'

'Ah! said Barati, 'when you obtained that secret restoration to your rights, a restoration that was granted upon the condition that no complaint should be entered against you, for the crimes posterior to that for which you were condemned at Naples; you imagined that old Barati, buried in an obscure corner of Paris, could not hear of your wild claims; you imagined that he would not hear that you had caused to be recognised as your son, him, whom you snatched from the misery to which I destined him. You were deceived, Giacomo, you were deceived! You have told me that, if you fall by my hand, a suit would be entered against this woman, to prove that she is the daughter of Vergnes, and I tell you that if you do not fall, you will be called to an account for having plied the trades of corsair and of counterfeiter, and be compelled to prove that this child is not a suppositious one.'

'You are silent, Giacomo;' continued Barati, 'you are all silent. You see, Marquis of Veroni, I am not so mad as they say. Do you think, Giacomo, that I am so imprudent as to come in search of you, without having taken due precautions? In the strife between us you have vanquished me too often; I have learned not to trust to my own strength! Yes, yes,' continued Barati, with increasing ardour, 'I have come to slay you, and I would give my life; I would sacrifice the fortune of this woman, whom I have loved as a daughter, to hold you, trembling and prostrate, beneath my knee, as you once held me. But I have anticipated what has happened; I foresaw that some hellish trick might give you, perhaps, the advantage over me, and I have taken my precautions.—Ah, ha! you jest no longer, Prince of Puzzano! you brave me no longer; you said a moment since, "I will show you how to take revenge." It is now my turn—Marquis of Veroni, let this man die upon the instant, and you shall be Prince of Puzzano.'

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Galidou had hearkened with drooping head and clenched hands. Pastourel had listened to the ex-councillor, as it were, in the features of his son: it seemed as if Barati's words could only touch him by the effect which they produced upon the marquis; he looked for some gesture of indignation, some cry of affection, which should repel the fearful proposition. A livid paleness spread itself over Pastourel's features, and he said, with a faltering voice to D'Auterive, who as well as Clemence, had listened with an air of extreme anxiety:

'Comte D'Auterive, I have told you the result which would follow from my death, to your wife and you.'

'Marquis of Veroni,' said Barati, 'you will return to tend your sheep if he outlives this hour!'

Pastourel quietly took his seat upon the bed, leaned his elbows upon the table, covered his face with his hands, as if he wished to remain a stranger to what was passing.

Barati appeared to imitate him; he settled himself in the chair to which he had been raised, and gazed at his son-in-law and at the son of Pastourel, watching them with extreme disquietude and distrust. This silence lasted for some moments. At last, D'Auterive made a sign to Galidou, and the latter approached Barati, and said:

'Come, let us arrange matters, worthy councillor; we are old friends; you will prevent this complaint against my father and myself, and at my entreaty he will arrange matters with the family of Lostanges.'

'That woman is not my daughter,' replied Barati. 'There is but one means to save yourself; it is to slay this man.'

During this while, D'Auterive, who was sitting near Pastourel, said to him:

'Monseigneur, you can harbour no enmity against myself and Clemence, you will not deprive us of all our hopes.'

'There is but one way to avert this misfortune,' replied Pastourel: 'it is to confine your father-in-law in a madhouse.'

'How!' rejoined Galidou; 'you will yield nothing, my dear councillor?'

'Nothing!' answered Barati.

'Is there no way of arranging matters, Monseigneur,' said D'Auterive, in his turn.

'None!' answered Pastourel.

'But have you no pity for any one,' said Galidou.

'Slay this man,' said Barati, "and I will give you my fortune, in addition to what which will then be yours.'

'You had more generosity formerly,' said D'Auterive to Pastourel.

'I wish to see your father-in-law die in a madhouse. Do as I have told you, and I will render you tenfold richer than you expect to be.'

Each one had spoken apart, and at the moment when the

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two old men offered their conditions—the one to the son, the other to the son-in-law of his enemy—the latter glanced each at his destined victim, and their eyes met. Clemence, who had watched this double scene, comprehended this double glance, and as if seized by a sudden horror, she exclaimed:

'Why slay them? We should not the less be lost.'

Neither Galidou nor D'Auterive replied, however. Giacomo's son was pale as ashes; he trembled in every limb; he stooped toward Barati's ear, and said:

'Send away your son-in-law; he would defend him.'

'I abandon him to you,' replied Barati. 'Slay him first.'

'Can you sacrifice your son to your vengeance?' said D'Auterive, in a low voice to Pastourel. 'If so, what is rank and title to you in this solitude. Abandon him to me, and I will give up Barati.'

'Begone!' said Pastourel.

Galidou and D'Auterive rose together, and stood face to face. By an involuntary movement, the former had placed his hand upon his sword; D'Auterive partly drew his own. They paused, and measured each other with a glance. Clemence threw herself between them. A frightful silence reigned for a moment in this gloomy hall.

Barati, who watched them with a smile of savage joy, suddenly exclaimed:

'Courage! courage! Marquis of Veroni; avenge me!'

Pastourel rose, and approaching Barati, said, with a calm voice:

'You are sufficiently avenged, Barati!'

He then unfastened the chain with which D'Auterive had bound his arms, and after he had restored him to the use of his limbs, he said:

'You can slay me now, Barati; you have just taken from me the last hope which bound me to this world.'

'Ah!' cried Barati, 'you love him, then—this son! Well, Pastourel, since you love him, I will let you live, and I will even suffer you to make him Prince of Puzzano.'

'As I suffer you,' rejoined Pastourel, 'to preserve your heritage for the devoted son-in-law and the grateful daughter, who have so well protected you.'

'I have neither daughter nor son-in-law more,' said Barati.

'And I have no longer a son,' said Pastourel. 'Begone, all of you.'

'One moment! one moment!' cried Galidou. 'You shall not escape in this manner, M. Barati, and you shall not drive me away thus, monseigneur, my father.'

'What do you venture to claim?' cried Pastourel.

'How! what do I venture to claim? Why, nothing but what is just, I think. Ah, ah! do you think the matter is to

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and thus? You are—by all the devils, truth is truth—you are two old scoundrels!'

'Wretch!' cried Pastourel.

'Prince,' said D'Auterive, angrily, 'the terms which he uses are harsh, but he is right.'

'Certainly, I am right. You seduced a young maiden, you, who call me a wretch, and you forsake her so that she is forced to wed another; and when the husband, who cannot be greatly blamed for that, wishes to send me, your son, to a hospital, or I know not where, you, in your paternal tenderness, pass me off as the child of a beggar, and you rear me up as a shepherd. Then the day comes when you persuade me to burn down the castle of La Roque, and, as a reward, you promise to make me Marquis of Veroni; I am so, and it is all well; but if I cease to be a marquis to morrow, it is much worse than if I had never been one; better have left me in the street; the first one who picked me up would have shown more tenderness.'

'He is right,' cried Barati; 'your son is right, Giacomo.'

'Be silent! robber of inheritances!' exclaimed Galidou, growing more and more exasperated as he continued. 'Do you think I do not know how you treated my poor mother? Do you think I do not know to what despair you reduced her, miserable wretch that you are? And here you are, to-day, both of you, making and unmaking our fortunes, as if we were puppets to be played with, and to be dressed up as princes or beggars to suit your whims! No, by all the fiends, it shall not be so! and I warn you that neither the one nor the other shall leave this hall, until you have arranged matters.'

'You should know,' unhappy child,' replied Pastourel, 'that no one can leave this hall without my permission; shake, if you can, that door, which you opened so easily on entering; call from the enclosure of these walls, whence no one will hear your cries. And now, we will remain together. You are armed, gentlemen, and so am I likewise. Would you essay the combat? Begin it, and in a few days hunger will avenge the vanquished upon the victor.'

'We shall see,' said Galidou, in a threatening tone—'Open this door!'

'When you acknowledge that you are in my power,' said Pastourel—'when you have asked pardon of me upon your knees.'

'But, monseigneur,' said D'Auterive.

'You have heard,' said Giacomo; 'this is the hour when I usually sleep. Adieu!'

He approached his bed, then threw himself upon it, and cried:

'Greyfoot!'

The dog leaped up.

'I am going to sleep. Watch, Greyfoot, watch!'

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The dog took his post at the bedside, casting angry glances at the remaining actors in the scene.

In the meanwhile, Barati had stooped and picked up the pistol which D'Auterive had wrested from him. He cocked it, but at the moment when he directed it toward the bed, the lamp was suddenly extinguished, a fearful and ominous noise was heard, the walls appeared to shake, and then profound silence and deep darkness reigned in the hall.

CHAPTER XXXII.

While these strange events were passing in the ruins, occurrences of great interest were in progress at the castle of La Roque. We left Bernard at the moment when, having overheard the project of Charlotte's flight with Vasconcellos or Don Jose, he had resolved to find the baron, and give him warning of it. The latter was already awaiting him. He heard Bernard's hurried steps, the violence with which he threw open the doors without waiting to be announced, and he felt assured that the young lover was the bearer of unpleasant news. The old man smiled at the thought. Bernard entered, and took a seat near him.

'Well, then,' said M. de la Roque, impatient to hear the tidings, 'how do matters stand? Have you discovered anything that throws light upon our suspicions.'

'Yes, baron,' said Bernard, 'and my doubts are entirely removed. I am sure that my fears are well founded. Charlotte is deceiving us.'

'Marquis de Velay,' said the baron, 'that is a serious charge. What proof have you?'

'I foresaw,' said Bernard, 'that your paternal tenderness, at first so anxious to learn the truth, would hesitate to believe it when it was told you.'

'Marquis de Velay, I may be permitted, perhaps, to feel a doubt where you feel a certainty. Alas! you lose but a single hope, but a single illusion of the many which cheer your youth, whilst I am robbed of the only one which remains to me; and, besides, sir, before a father condemns his daughter, he should have irrefragable proofs, and who can say that you do not magnify some trifling act of imprudence to a grave offence.'

Bernard had not forgotten that it was the baron himself who had excited his suspicions, but he attributed this change in the old man's views to a caprice of paternal affection—affection which is sometimes so severe, sometimes so indulgent, and he replied:

'I regret what I have told you, baron; but I was unwilling to break my promise.'

'Well, well,' rejoined the baron, 'I see how it is; your

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jealousy has magnified matters; you have been alarmed at some chance meeting, some familiar words.'

This remark, uttered with an air of disdain, produced the effect which the baron expected, and Bernard exclaimed, hastily:

'*Ma foi*! I know not what name you will give to a project of elopement or abduction, but at midnight this Vasconcellos is to wait for your daughter at the garden gate, and at break of day they will have crossed the frontiers. I would have spared you these cruel tidings, but I had promised to tell you all—'

'At midnight, then,' cried the baron, interrupting him, 'at the little gate of the park—I will be there, marquis, I will be there.'

'But this injury is mine as well as yours.'

'You have no right to avenge it, sir,' said the baron, 'none—do you hear? it is I—I—who must punish, and will punish the guilty ones.'

'But, sir, I have a right, I think, to give this M. Vasconcellos the lesson that he has merited.'

'By and by, sir,' said the baron, 'by and by; when the father is once satisfied, it will be the lover's turn.'

As Bernard was about to remonstrate, M. de la Roque continued, in a more peremptory tone:

'It must be as I have decided, sir; besides, you need not be alarmed,' he added, 'if you are bent upon avenging this injury, I will leave place for your vengeance.'

'Do you doubt it?' said the marquis.

'We shall see, sir.'

We will not relate the rest of this interview; suffice it to say that the baron and Bernard, accompanied by Pierre and Jean Couteau, with three or four domestics well armed, concealed themselves in a small thicket, a few paces distant from the garden gate.

With the exception of the baron and Bernard all were ignorant of the object of their ambuscade. M. de la Roque directed them to keep perfectly silent, and told them that when the proper moment came, he would give his orders.

A few minutes before midnight, a man on horseback, leading a second by the bridle, rode up to the little gate which was soon opened, and a female came from the garden.

'Is it you, Charlotte?' said Don Jose.

'Yes, it is I. Let us hasten, for Bernard was here this evening, and had a long interview with my father, and to-morrow perhaps, I could not accompany you.'

At this moment the baron cried out: 'Seize them! seize them!' and all rushed upon Don Jose, and threw him to the ground; at the baron's orders his daughter as well as Frias,

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was carried back to the castle, and the old man, grasping Bernard by the arm, cried:

'At last I hold my vengeance in my hands!'

These words were uttered with such an accent of savage joy, that the young man started. He even feared one of those sanguinary acts of which the baron, as was said, had been guilty in past times, and he resolved to prevent it. He declared his resolution to the baron, who merely replied:

'I will be more just and moderate than you expect, Bernard. Who knows if you will not find my dealings with the culprits too lenient?

These words, which apparently announced a calm, and equitable purpose, were uttered, however, with such a thrill of cruel pleasure that they were far from reassuring Bernard, and his fears were redoubled when he heard the baron order his servants to conduct Vasconcellos to the most retired part of the building, and to confine Charlotte in her chamber.

'Do you intend,' said the Marquis, 'to keep this Vasconcellos prisoner? or do you meditate some attempt against his life?'

'You will see what I intend, for you will follow me, Marquis de Velay, and you Jean Couteau, and you also,' he said, turning to his domestics. 'But as I wish to satisfy you as to my intentions, marquis, I have sent for the criminal judge of the bailiwick and his clerk—No, Marquis de Velay, there will be no violence, no bloodshed—you will see.'

As the baron had previously warned the judge to be in readiness, in the course of an hour he reached the castle, accompanied by his clerk. In the interval Bernard essayed every means to penetrate the baron's designs, but the latter made him no reply, except these words:

'Believe me, believe me, my vengeance will be cruel, but there will be room for yours.'

The judge entered, and the baron, followed by all those who had been present at the arrest of the fugitives, repaired to the apartment in which Don Jose was confined. At the same time he gave orders that Charlotte should be brought in, and when she appeared, he took his seat, and ordered his domestics to range themselves around the chamber. He requested Bernard to sit near him; he desired a chair to be brought for the judge, a table and writing materials for the clerk, and then summoned Vasconcellos and Charlotte to advance to the middle of the chamber, as if they had been in the presence of a tribunal. He then began in a tone of great dignity and calmness:

'Worthy judge, I have requested your presence here to receive an accusation. I present it before all persons here assembled, in order that they may confirm the truth, if my grief should cause me to distort it.'

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'Speak, sir!' replied the judge.

'It is more than three months since this man, who has come to reside in this country under the name of Vasconcellos, presented himself at my house.'

'Is this true, sir?' said the judge.

'It is true,' replied Don Jose.

'Write,' said the judge, turning to the clerk.

'I know not for what cause,' continued the baron, 'this man has since that time avoided my presence, for the reception which I gave him, was such as one gives to a neighbour of good birth. I imagined that the society of a blind old man had little charms for him, and I had almost forgotten him, when I was informed that he took advantage of my hours of repose to pay frequent visits to my daughter.'

'Is this true?' said the judge, turning to Vasconcellos.

The latter hesitated; but, confronted as he was by the domestics, all of whom could testify to the fact, he durst not deny it, and he answered:

'It is true.'

'Write!' said the judge.

Don Jose cast a glance upon Charlotte, who could scarcely repress her shame and indignation.

The baron paused, as if choked with grief at the crime which he was about to disclose.

'On this very day, sir, this man agreed to meet my daughter at the ruins of La Roque, at the old sorcerer's who inhabits them; and during this interview, assisted by the jugglerie of that wretch, he has completely robbed my child of her senses, for a project of elopement was arranged between them; this project they have attempted to put in execution, and at this hour they would be beyond the reach of my justice, or of yours, rather, if I had not watched their movements, and prevented their flight at the moment when the treacherous seducer led his horses to the little gate of my garden; these horses I have detained, and they belong to this Vasconcellos; the words uttered by my daughter leave no doubt as to their design, and I have kept this man a prisoner in order to deliver him up to your justice, as the betrayer of my daughter.'

The judge repeated his question.

'Is it true, sir?'

'Appearances are against me,' said Don Jose, 'but I am not, I cannot be the betrayer of Mademoiselle de la Roque.'

'Have I deviated from the facts in any point?' said the baron, looking around him.

The testimony of all present was unanimous in confirming the truth of the old seigneur's words, and the judge directed the clerk to write down this evidence also; he then said:

'And now, Baron de la Roque, what do you propose to do?'

The baron covered his face with his hands, like a man

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overwhelmed with the deepest affliction, and kept silence for a moment. Then, with the air of one who has subdued himself by a great effort of generosity, he replied:

'Alas, sir! the first impulse of my heart was a desire for vengeance, but a father's tenderness has resumed its sway. Yes, yes, I know that I can severely punish him who has brought affliction and dishonour into my family: I know that I can confine in a convent the daughter who has cast a stain upon her name. But it would break my heart to chastise the child whom I have loved so well, and whom I still love, notwithstanding her guilt!'

This paroxysm of sensibility astonished all present, and affected even the judge himself; the baron continued in a voice rendered almost inarticulate from emotion:

'Let this man make my daughter the reparation which he owes her; let him espouse her, and I can still pardon them.'

This method of obtaining vengeance was by no means pleasing to Bernard, who found that he had favoured his rival, in seeking to avenge himself, but it fell like a thunderbolt upon Don Jose and Charlotte, who gazed upon each other in dismay, while the judge exclaimed with emotion:

'Fall at your father's feet, mademoiselle, and implore his forgiveness; and you, sir, thank the Baron de la Roque for the honour which he does you, and which you are far from deserving. You will espouse her whom you have led astray.'

'I!' exclaimed Charlotte, with horror, 'espouse this man! it is impossible!'

'Impossible!' said the judge.

'Impossible!' replied Don Jose.

'Ha! is it so, then?' cried Bernard, who imagined that he had found an opportunity for interfering in the affair. Well, then, M. Vasconcellos, you will account to me for your infamous conduct.'

'I do not recognise your right to meddle in the affair,' said Don Jose, proudly, 'but, if it suits you, I am very ready to give you a lesson in prudence and politeness.'

'Gentlemen,' said the judge, interposing with an air of authority, 'we have nothing to do here either with duels or points of honour. I have received an accusation from the Baron de la Roque; this accusation is justified by acknowledged and flagrant acts; the baron offers you an honourable means of arranging matters; this means you refuse?'

Charlotte and Don Jose, prompted by the same emotion, replied with one voice:

'Yes, yes!'

'Well, then,' said the judge, 'the law must act now. You, sir, will be taken to the prison of Foix. Your position as a foreigner renders this necessary; you must not be permitted to escape after your crime—you, who have neither fortune

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nor family in this country to be security for you. As to you, mademoiselle, if it please your father to keep you in his house, he can do so; but if he is unwilling to consent to this arrangement, I think it best that you should be taken hence to the convent of St. Benoit, where you will remain until the issue of this trial.'

Vasconcellos was stupified, but Charlotte, gazing upon the judge with a loftiness that displayed all the resolution of her character, replied in a tone of scorn:

'A word will suffice to disprove this accusation, and baffle all your projects of severity and imprisonment; know then, sir, since I am compelled to speak before these witnesses, know that ——'

'Silence! silence!' cried Vasconcellos; 'you forget *another*.'

Charlotte answered to this interruption by a gesture of indignation, and exclaimed:

'But I will not be disgraced, I——'

'Silence!' rejoined Vasconcellos, 'all is not lost!'

'Oh!' cried the baron, 'relieve me from this distressing scene. Take away this man—conduct my daughter to a convent—Go, go!'

'But sir——' exclaimed Charlotte.

'Ah!' said the baron, sinking back upon his chair, 'the unhappy child would kill me then!'

The judge, moved by this excess of despair, directed Vasconcellos to be led away, who submitted, saying to Bernard:

'I am very ready to entertain you, Marquis de Velay.'

'When you please,' replied the latter.

Charlotte strongly protested against the violence to which she was subjected, but Jean Couteau, who had grasped her by the arms, said to her in a low voice:

'I know how matters stand, mademoiselle. Be calm; I will make the baron listen to reason.'

All retired, leaving M. de la Roque and the old hunter alone.

The door of the hall was scarcely closed, when the baron, who heard the heavy steps of Jean Couteau approaching him, said in a rough tone:

'I know all, Jean Couteau, I know all; she is not my daughter; Don Jose is her father, she has not been betrayed; I know all. Spare your words, but I am avenged!'

'What do you purpose then, my lord?' said Jean Couteau, in alarm.

'What do I purpose? Ha!' said the baron, striking his hands together, 'fifteen years of delay are not too long to wait for the vengeance which I purpose.'

'But this marriage is impossible, as you well know.'

'Yes, Yes!' rejoined the baron, 'impossible! Ha! let them keep silence—Don Jose, condemned as the seducer of a

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maiden of noble family—Don Jose, disguised under a false name, will be sentenced to the galleys—to the galleys! do you hear? and his daughter will end her days in a prison for abandoned women.

'But if they speak?'

'Ha! then,' said the baron, 'Don Jose is guilty of adultery, and the accusation will reach to his accomplice Paula, in the convent where she has feigned to take refuge against my brutal tyranny. Ha! the devout Paula will leave the house of God to take her place upon the bench of the criminal. And Charlotte, branded as the child of guilt, will henceforth have neither name nor fortune—nothing! Ah, ha!' added the old seigneur, rising, and stretching his clenched hands towards heaven, 'let them speak, or let them be silent—it matters little; I am avenged!'

Couteau gazed upon him for some time, terrified at the delirium of his ferocious joy, then, knowing that all persuasion would be lost upon his master, he retired, muttering:

'There is but one man who can save them, and that man is Pastourel.'

He at once left the castle, and forgetting his superstitious fears, bent his steps toward the ruins.

He was too familiar with the localities of the old mansion to find any difficulty in discovering the hall, which, from the description of his daughter-in-law, was occupied by Pastourel. He advanced at once toward the door, but upon reaching it, he heard a sound that chilled his very soul with terror. Cries, oaths, words of fury or complaint, echoed upon the ears of Poor Jean Couteau.

'Ah!' he cried, falling powerless upon his knees, 'this is the hour when he conjures up his evil spirits. Heaven chastises me for my presumption!'

The poor man had not the strength to rise and flee, and he began to pray, mingling with his prayers all the formulas of exorcism with which he was acquainted. Although this by no means quieted the infernal din which resounded in the hall, it gave him time to listen to it more carefully, and to distinguish some of its sounds. By degrees, these demoniacal cries put on a strange resemblance to the voices of men, interrupted now and then by that of a woman. Among these voices he fancied that he could recognise Galidou's, and at last, he could hear what he said:

'The devil take it!' cried Galidou; 'where are you, Comte D'Auterive?'

'Here.'

'Come this way; let us find the door.'

'Come yourself; I cannot tell into what trap a man may set his foot in this accursed hall.'

'Oh, the old wretch!' cried Galidou, 'yet I should have

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known enough of his tricks to foresee that he would baffle us.'

'Clemence! Clemence!' said D'Auterive, 'I do not hear you.'

'I dare not stir, sir!'

'If I only knew where the door was—let him say it will open only at his will, I will break my fists to pieces, or dash it down!'

All this bore no resemblance to a gathering of evil spirits, but to the confused sounds of men taken in a snare, and these men called each other by names which were known to Couteau. He hesitated for a long time, fearful of being duped by some diabolical machination, and, besides this, he was afraid to meddle with the projects of Pastourel.

'But still,' he said to himself, 'if I have acted sinfully in coming to demand aid from a sorcerer, I will repair my fault by saving those whom he wishes to destroy.'

As soon as he had arrived at this conclusion, he commenced knocking against the door, crying:

'Who is within?'

'Ah! there is a human voice,' said Comte D'Auterive; 'let us listen.'

Jean Couteau repeated his question.

'Ha! it is Father Couteau!' replied Galidou, in a joyous and familiar voice, that a demon could hardly have imitated. 'It is we,' he replied, stepping carefully toward the door: it is I, the Marquis of Veroni, the Comte and Comtesse D'Auterive, with her father. Pastourel has shut us up here to play some infernal trick. Open the door, Father Couteau!'

The latter, now reassured, endeavoured to find a key, a lock, a bolt, but he discovered nothing of the kind; he pushed against the door, but he might as well have pushed against a wall.'

'It is of no use,' he replied, 'the door seems set in the wall.'

'So, so! does he expect to keep us to perish here with hunger?' said Galidou. 'Well, then, Jean Couteau, if you cannot open it, break it down.'

Couteau looked about for a large stone, and began to beat against the door with all his strength, but without making the slightest impression upon it.

'It would take a battering ram to break it down,' he said. 'I do not know what to do.'

'Well, then,' cried Barati, 'go and bring help.'

Before Couteau could reply, Galidou's voice arrested him:

'One moment! one moment!' he cried. 'If Father Couteau leaves us, heaven only knows what this accursed sorcerer will do to us. Do not forget, Father Couteau, that if any harm happens to me, or to Comte D'Auterive, or to his wife, or Father Barati, do not forget, I say, to testify, that it is the

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result of the jugglerles of Pastourel, or rather, remember this, of Giacomo Spaffa, Prince of Puzzano.'

'Ha!' cried Jean Couteau.

'You are accusing your father,' said Barati.

'He is not my father,' said Galidou; 'he is the devil, or one of his instruments. I do not know how it can serve him, but he has used me like an idiot, to make me play the part of marquis for some end or other. Jean Couteau, I am Galidou, neither more nor less; I like that better than all the marquisates in the world, that come from hell.'

'Go, go, Father Couteau,' said Comte D'Auterive, 'and bring some one with you to bear evidence as to the state in which you find us, whether living or dead.'

'*Ma foi*!' said Jean Couteau, 'I shall perhaps find the criminal judge at the Baron de la Roque's, and he will be the best witness that I could bring you.'

'Yes, yes,' replied Barati, 'bring him, and we will see then if all his traps will save the wretch who has confined us here, from the gallows or from the stake which he has so well deserved.'

While occupied by this adventure, Jean Couteau had entirely forgotten the motive which had led him to the ruins, but when he spoke of returning to the castle, and of the criminal judge, he recalled to mind that he had come hither to implore aid of the very man whom he was now about to deprive of his prisoners, and he said aloud:

'But all this will not save the others. Well, God is powerful, and he will preserve them all, if such is his will and purpose.'

'Who is in danger then?' said a voice at his side, at the sound of which the poor man fell with his face to the ground,

'Have no fear, Jean Couteau, have no fear!' said Pastourel; 'he who serves God with a grateful heart is safe from all peril, were he in the presence of Satan, and he who is near you, is a servant of God and a friend.'

'Is it—is it you, Pastourel?' said Jean Couteau. 'Oh, I have never done you any harm—have compassion on my soul!'

'Give me your hand, Jean Couteau; you will clasp the hand of a man, and not of a demon: rise, my old comrade, in whom there dwells more honour than in all those wretches who are confined in this hall.'

By a remnant of that submission which had always influenced Jean Couteau, he obeyed, and Pastourel, leading him from the door, conducted him into the middle of the old court, and said to him:

'It was here, Jean, that you saved Galidou from the savage anger of the baron, and here I swear to grant the request which you have come to demand of me. Look at me well,

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Couteau! I take God to witness, I raise my hand toward heaven, and you see that it does not tremble; I am a Christian like yourself, my poor Couteau. Come, then, tell me what has brought you to these ruins!'

Jean Couteau, somewhat encouraged by Pastourel's asseverations, now described the scenes which had passed at the baron's mansion, and the frightful position in which he had placed Charlotte and Don Jose.

'You know the secret of all things,' added Jean Couteau, 'have you no means to save them?'

Pastourel reflected for a moment, and then said:

'If it were merely Charlotte and Don Jose, they are scarcely worth a thought, but there lives a poor woman who would be crushed in the shock of these fearful passions, and her I would gladly save. Return home, Jean, I will watch over them; and may God set the good which I would do against the evil which I have committed.'

'Do you speak truth?'

'Yes,' replied Pastourel, in a sad tone.

'Persevere, persevere, Pastourel!' replied Couteau with enthusiasm, 'see, Pastourel! with all one's power, with all one's skill, there is hope and safety in God alone; he alone will never fail us!'

'You are right, Jean,' said Pastourel, in a tone of profound dejection, 'you are right! we can call nothing ours in this world; all fail us, even the affections of our children.'

'But what has the *fillou* done then?' said Jean Couteau; 'what has he done that you have shut him up with the rest?'

'Did you not hear him renounce me?'

'*Ma foi*,' said Jean, 'he is not a true son—see you! he is not a son like mine.'

'What mean you, Jean?'

'Sir, Pastourel,' replied the old man, in a humble tone, 'the child to whom one cannot say, with a lifted hand, "I am your father; you bear my name as well as my blood; and you owe me reverence because I have never failed in my duty towards you"—this child will be presumptuous and ungrateful; it is the judgment of heaven; it is a punishment for past offences.'

'Where, then, Oh God! hast thou bestowed sense and wisdom,' said Pastourel, 'that this lesson comes to me from this man? You are right, Couteau; go and release him, together with those who are confined with him; but say nothing of our meeting. I will hence and see to the safety of the others.'

Pastourel pointed out to Couteau the secret spring which opened the door of the hall. He concealed himself amid the ruins, and heard Galidou exclaim:

'Ah, ah! the judge is still at the baron's! let us go; it is time to rid the country of this sorcerer.'

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Pastourel turned his back upon the ruins, and took the road to the convent of St. Benoit. The others, followed by Couteau, bent their steps to the abode of the Baron de la Roque.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

We will not follow D'Auterive and his wife, Galidou and Barati, on their way to the baron's mansion; neither will we accompany Pastourel, but will at once enter into the convent of St. Benoit. It was situated in one of the deep sinuosities of the mountain, in a delightful valley, covered with shade and with the richest verdure. At every step, swollen rivulets, speeding onward to leap into the distant ravines, to feed some muddy and devastating torrent, flowed, clear and limpid, amid the tufted herbage, amid soft and gentle undulations, lending, at each moment, variety to the aspect of this close-environed valley, which had but one issue, and this by a narrow pass, that was completely occupied by the monastery.

The convent, which thus shut in the valley, was built upon a succession of low arches, that gave passage to its waters; and while the one side looked upon the bottom of a verdant and lovely glen, the other leaned over a vast and rocky wall, which descended perpendicularly to the bed of a mighty torrent. It was said by the country people that this convent, when seen from the plain below, appeared like a window in the mountain.

The delightful path which led thither was well adapted to inspire mild and pleasant thoughts; it seemed impossible that suffering souls could inhabit this lonely Eden, and if ever the aspect of a convent was enticing, it was here. But alas! like almost everything which wears a charming exterior in this world, within, it did not correspond with the scene which surrounded it. The walls of the monastery once passed, a large and barren court-yard met the eye. The earth was trampled down, and bare of verdure. At the left of the court was the vegetable garden, well tilled and cultivated, doubtless, but its insipid regularity formed a striking contrast to the rich vegetation without the walls.

A few sickly trees, whose fruits did not ripen at this elevation, cast a feeble shade upon the white soil of the walks. On the right hand were the communes, the wash-house, the dispensary, all coated with lime, and shining with hard and uniform neatness, varied neither by the dark green lichen nor by a tuft of yellow moss. Every window was furnished with thick iron bars and a close grating; lastly, in front stood the main building, enclosing the chapel, the refectory, the cells, and above, the apartments of the Superior and the dormitories.

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At the hour at which we enter it, the chapel is lighted; from eight to ten nuns are here upon their knees, in prayer; while another, standing erect near the rope of the chapel bell, tolls from time to time a melancholy knell, which leaps from echo to echo up the valley; while, on the side of the plain, it seems to fly and lose itself in space.

The nuns, kneeling upon the marble pavement, with their hands crossed upon their breasts, are motionless as statues, and naught is heard but the low and monotonous murmur of their voices. Suddenly a woman, of lofty stature, with pallid face and features wan with fasting, but with a haughty brow, and eyes still animated with a vivid fire, appeared at the inner door of the chapel, and said in a slow and solemn tone:

'Pray, my sisters, our holy mother's soul is passing!'

The nun who held the rope sounded the knell anew, and the new comer, kneeling with the rest, muttered a short prayer, and then withdrew.

A quarter of an hour passed, when another female appeared; she was still young, but pale and thin like the other, and her eyes were animated with the same vivid light.

'Pray, my sisters,' she said, 'pray! The death struggle draws near, and no priest, warned by the knell, comes to receive our holy mother's confession.'

This nun kneeled like the rest, muttered a short prayer, and retired. She ascended a dark and wide stairway of stone, entered a long corridor, and opened the door of a cell. Upon a wooden bedstead, which was covered with a simple mattress, lay a woman dressed in the coarse woollen garb of a nun. A large cross of gold, which was suspended from her neck by a blue ribbon, alone announced her dignity. The cell was large, but no tapestry covered the walls; they were adorned, however, with a few pictures representing religious subjects.

A long oaken table, with a bench on either side, a wooden chair and two stools of the same material, composed the furniture of this large chamber. The bedstead faced the door with the head against the wall. Kneeling in prayer on one side of the bed, was the nun who had first entered the chapel; the second placed herself on the opposite side, and both rehearsed the prayers for the dying. The Superior uttered the responses in a firm voice, with her hands crossed upon her breast, and her eyes directed towards heaven, motionless as if she had been in her coffin. A single lamp lighted this gloomy scene with rays, which the wind, stealing through the crevices of the door, threatened every moment to extinguish as they cast their changing and fantastic shadows upon the wall.

A quarter of an hour passed thus, when the first nun rose;

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to seek, doubtless, the sisters in the chapel, and to repeat her admonition, but the Superior said to her:

'Ah! let them pray for me, sister Martha; let the knell sound without ceasing, until a priest arrives to confess and absolve me.'

The nun, whom the Superior thus addressed, replied:

'Wherefore these tears, my mother? After the thirty years of penitence which you have passed within these walls, you can appear before God without fear.'

'Thirty years of penitence, my daughter, do not suffice to tear the demon of temptation from the heart of the sinner; thirty years of penitence have not prevented me from feeling a senseless desire, a desire that augments with my approaching end, and I know not if at this hour I would not resign the safety of my soul, to see for a moment him whom I have seen but once. Pray, pray for me, my daughters, my heart fails in the trial, and the past, which I thought buried for ever, rises before my soul to tempt me.'

Sister Martha now left the cell and reappeared a moment after.

Soon it was the turn of the other sister to seek the chapel, and when she rose at the appointed time, the Superior said to her:

'Pray! pray for me! I regret the life of penitence which I have passed in this hallowed house; I would fain have lived amid the joys of the world. Pray for me! Have I not wept and prayed enough, oh God! enough to stifle in this breast every passion which is not dedicated to thee, every regret but that of having feebly served thee, every hope but that of thy mercy! Go, Claude, and let my daughters pray for the trembling sinner!'

The younger of the two nuns now left the chamber, and soon returned to kneel again at the bedside of the sufferer. The two nuns had obeyed the words of the Superior, but although in the presence of approaching death, near the bed of that dying woman who trembled for her salvation, not a sign of terror or of pity appeared upon their features. Their faces seemed of marble, lighted up by living eyes; they had not looked, they had not spoken to each other; they had not rendered to the Superior one of those kind offices which bring some solace to the suffering of the sick, while the knell tolled and vibrated above the gloomy abode.

A half hour passed in the same sad monotony, and the knell still sounded. The Superior rose for a moment almost half erect, and, casting a bewildered glance around, said in a gloomy tone:

'Enough, enough! God has cursed me; no priest will come, and I shall die without confession and absolution. Go—let the prayers cease! who prays for the damned?'

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She sank backward upon the bed, and the two sisters elevated their voices, and rehearsed their prayers so loud as to drown the groans of the dying wooman.

At this moment the sound of the chapel bell was blended with that of another, the bell of the outer gate of the convent. The Superior raised her hands towards heaven, and said in an ardent tone:

'Blessed be thou, oh, my God! thou dost not leave me to die with guilt upon my soul.'

The two nuns remained motionless. It was not their office to open the gate or to announce the arrival of those who entered the convent, and they remained upon their knees, continuing their prayers. The Superior, with her eyes closed, and as if lost in thought, seemed to feel neither impatience nor curiosity. A long space of time elapsed, when a third nun appeared at the threshold of the apartment.

Before speaking, she kneeled, muttered a short prayer, and then said:

'Mother, a stranger demands our hospitality for this night and for to-morrow.'

'Is it not a priest?' said the Superior anxiously.

'He wears the garb of a pilgrim, but we have not asked him whether he is a minister of God.'

'Whatever he may be, let him receive the hospitality which is due to every traveller who claims it,' said the sufferer; 'and, since he is a pilgrim, bid him pray for the salvation of the Superior of this convent, for seven days, both morning and evening, while he accomplishes his pilgrimage. If he is a priest, let him enter, for there is here a soul about to appear before God, which stands in need of the absolution of one of his ministers, that it may be cleansed of a last sin.'

The nun left the chamber, the prayers continued at the bedside of the sufferer, the knell still sounded as though no one had arrived. A moment after the nun entered, and said to the Superior:

'The pilgrim is not a priest, my mother, but he has a writing from the pope which authorizes him to receive confession *in extremis* and to repeat it to a priest.'

'Let him enter then,' said the Superior, 'if God has not willed to grant me more, it is because I have not merited it.'

The nun left the chamber again, and reappeared with a man clothed, in truth, as a pilgrim, but who was no other than Pastourel. A sort of cowl covered the upper part of his face, and he stopped for a moment on the threshold at the sight of the chill nakedness of the chamber which he was about to enter. The two nuns remained motionless, and their eyes, which were fastened upon the ground, were not raised to glance at the new comer. A sensation of awe and sorrow chilled Pastourel's bosom at this spectacle of death,

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in which all solace seemed wanting, even that of tears. He approached the bed of the Superior, and gazed for a moment at that pallid face, withered as it was, more by penitence than by years, at those blue and hollow temples, that sharp and glistening nose, those thin, pale lips, contracted with pain; he beheld those meagre white and lifeless hands, and smitten with a solemn grief, he said:

'In what can I serve you, madam?'

At this voice the women, who were kneeling at the bedside, started with an involuntary movement that was at once controlled, however; and the Superior raised herself, and unclosed her eyes, which seemed to gleam with light, then falling backward, she exclaimed, in a tone of deep distress:

'My God! my God! deliver me from this baneful thought; free me from the temptation which rises incessantly before my soul to entangle my last steps.'

Pastourel was moved by a feeling of curiosity, and he said to the Superior:

'You have been told, madam, that I have received from our holy father the right to hear the confession of the dying, and to repeat it to a priest.'

'You will repeat mine to father Anselmo,' replied the Superior; 'and if it is God's will that he has left this world, for until this day he has never failed at our summons, you will repeat it to a man of irreproachable sanctity, for the greater the fault, the more powerful should be the voice to absolve it.'

'I shall soon visit Rome, madam,' replied Pastourel. 'I shall go thither, to seek a pardon from our holy father for an unworthy sinner, and it will but commend me to him to be the bearer of your last words.'

'Do you go to our holy father, sir? Oh, blessed be your steps! May God guide you!'

'I listen, madam,' said Pastourel.

'Father, draw nearer,' said the dying woman.

Pastourel bent over her; the two sisters concealed their faces upon the mattrass, and wrapped their heads in their woollen veils, that they might not hear her. The Superior continued:

'The crime which led me hither has been confessed, and I have received absolution for it, but you must hear it to know how I have renewed it. A fault rendered me a mother, and this fault I have expiated by long years of suffering in the world, and by long years of penitence in this abode.'

These words appeared strange to Pastourel, who had come to seek the baroness De la Roque, who had taken refuge in this convent. He gazed more attentively at the face which lay thus beneath his eye, and he started backwards, as if the flickering flame of the lamp, had given familiar outlines to

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those thin and withered features. It could not be the barrenness; the impress of age differs widely from that of grief.

'I listen, madam,' he replied.

'On entering this holy house, I took a vow to forget all past affection, to expel from my heart every remembrance of the world which I had resigned, to efface all regret for the deceitful joys of life, to guard my soul from all return to that which I ought so greatly to despise.'

The sufferer paused, it seemed as if she were unable to proceed; overwhelmed rather by the thought of that which she was about to utter than by the exertion she had made in speaking:

'Continue,' said Pastourel.

'After thirty years of solitude and tears, at the moment when I am about to appear before God, with a soul purified by penitence, I have stumbled in my path, and in my weakness I have cried: I would resign my soul's salvation, if, but for a moment before my death, I could see that child which I saw but a moment after its birth.'

'Great God!' cried Pastourel, bending over the bed.

'Pray for her! she is dead!' said a solemn voice, and he fell upon his knees at the bedside, while one of the sisters rose and left the chamber.

Pastourel still kept his place. All the nuns of the convent entered, and fell upon their knees around the bed, while one of their number brought a register in which she wrote a few lines. When the prayer was ended, the nun who had brought the register said to the two sisters:

'Here is the certificate of the death of our holy Superior. Sister Martha and Sister Claude, you were present at her decease, sign it.'

The two nuns signed it.

'You also have received her last confession, sign it, sir,' added the nun.

Pastourel took the pen, and before signing it, he read these words:

'On this day, August 20th, 1724, died in our holy house, the pious and devout dame Agatha, our Superior, formerly known in the world as the right noble demoiselle Armande de Lostanges, dame Barati.' Pastourel's brain reeled; he looked again, and read these words: 'Were present at her decease, (the two signatures followed,) Sister Claude, formerly in the world Baroness de la Roque; Sister Martha, formerly in the world Duchess de Nevres.'

Pastourel was obliged to lean against the table to keep himself from falling, and it was with a trembling hand that he added below these names. 'And was present also at this decease to recognise herein the hand of God, Giacomo Spaffa, Prince of Pusano.'

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The nun who had written the certificate, read it aloud, and it was only at the moment that she pronounced Giacomo's name, that Paula and Leonore raised their eyes to his face, but not a trace of emotion appeared in their features.

'And now retire, sir,' said the nun who alone had spoken, 'retire, sir; the chapter is about to assemble to choose a new Superior. Pray God that he may inspire us to elect one worthy to take the place of her whom we have lost.'

Pastourel withdrew to the chamber which had been assigned for his lodging, and the nuns returned in procession to the chapel.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Pastourel passed a sleepless night, the scene which he had just witnessed had deeply affected him. His wild hopes, his ambitious projects had vanished, it is true; his son's ingratitude had pierced his soul, and his gross vulgarity had humbled his pride; but he asked himself if this were enough? if he deserved the least pity from heaven? The words of Jean Couteau returned incessantly to his mind, and, racked by grief and penitence, he awaited the dawn of day.

As soon as the sun appeared above the horizon, the gate of the *communes* was opened by the gardener, and he could leave the building where he had passed the night, but the convent remained closed.

Pastourel inquired of the gardener by what means he could see one of the sisters of the community; the latter answered that none of them could hold communication with a stranger, except by the express permission of the Superior; and that as there was now no Superior, it would be necessary to wait until the election was concluded.

Pastourel resolved to profit by this opportunity, in order to obtain from the man some information which might be useful to him, and he said:

'Which of your dames will be chosen Superior?'

'*Ma foi*,' said the gardener, who, finding an occasion for speaking freely, was disposed to take advantage of it, 'the dispute will be a warm one, for there are two candidates, who have each a party.'

'Ah!' said Pastourel, 'and what are the names of these two candidates?'

'Their names will not tell you much,' said the gardener; 'but I know well enough for whom I would vote, if I had a voice in the chapter.'

'For whom would you vote, then?'

'For sister Martha, in truth—for sister Martha.'

This was the Duchess de Nevres.

'She is kind and generous, then, I suppose?' said Giacomo,

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'who felt a sensation of joy at this display of preference for his sister.

'Between ourselves,' said the gardener, 'it is not for her kindness and generosity that I would choose her, seeing that I have nothing to do with them—in truth, do you see! it is thus—she is not very zealous for the rules; and if she were our Superior, *ma foi*, one could regale himself a little, without fear of being turned away; and if a fair pilgrim came from time to time to demand hospitality, I do not think that sister Martha would make very strict inquiries as to where she passed the night.'

The gardener winked, as he said this, and smiled significantly.

'It is your opinion, then, that sister Martha finds it tiresome in the convent?'

'Ah!' said the gardener, she weeps less over her past faults, than for an opportunity of repeating them.'

'But how know you,' said Pastourel, 'that sister Martha has any faults to reproach herself with?'

'Why, if not, why should she be here? Ah, ha! this is not a convent of novices,' said the gardener; 'I will answer for it, there is not one here who in times past has not done something to justify the rigour of our rules.'

'But in this case it would seem that they ought to be very indulgent. When one has sinned one's self—'

'Ha!' said the gardener, interrupting Pastourel, in a tone of irony, 'you must be a very holy man, if you think that. They are all shrews. Hold—there was Mother Agatha, who has just died; she had not formerly been very wicked—but she was so anxious about her salvation, that she held the reins pretty tight: but it will be far worse if sister Claude is chosen.'

'Oh,' said Pastourel, 'it is sister Claude, then, who disputes the place with sister Martha; and she would be more severe!'

'She would be towards others what she is towards herself. It is frightful, my dear friend,' said the gardener, 'to think what a woman's frame can endure. Stay now—I am passably sturdy and strong; well, in the course of the holy week, I lose more than thirty pounds; I feel dizzy, as if I were drunk, the fasting takes such hold of me. But as for sister Claude, I cannot tell what she is made of; she fasts every day; every day, prayers, penance, discipline, vigils; well, nothing affects her; she comes, she goes, she is ready for everything, and at all hours—and I never meet her that I do not start, when she fixes her flashing eyes upon me. How does she live? What gives her this strength that never wearies? If we were not in the house of the Lord, and if she were not the most exem-

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piary of our dames, I should think that she was possessed by the devil.'

Pastourel was reflecting on these words, when suddenly the chapel resounded with chaunts and thanksgivings, and the gardener said:

'Ah! the election is finished. They are installing the new Superior. When the ceremony is ended, I will present your request to her.'

'Who can they have chosen?' said Pastourel.

'Wait a moment,' said the gardener; 'I will tell you at once.'

He approached the chapel, listened, and appeared greatly astonished.

He listened anew; at last he returned, with an air of disappointment, and said to Pastourel:

'Something extraordinary is passing in the chapel.'

'What is it?'

'I told you that I would soon know which of our dames had been elected?'

'Yes.'

'They have just finished with the salutation; and as I know the voices of them all, I said to myself: "I shall hear all those who repeat the formula before the Superior, and the one whose voice is wanting, must have been elected." Well I counted; I recognised all the voices that spoke; but I heard neither the voice of sister Claude, nor that of sister Martha. Something has happened.'

Pastourel conjectured that one of the two claimants had refused to render homage to the other, and the sole vexation which he felt at this incident was, that he was still left in uncertainty as to the result of the election. But Pastourel, after having witnessed the strife of human passions in the world, and under their worst aspect, did not imagine that he had yet a lesson to learn on this subject.

He waited until the ceremony was ended; and, hoping to obtain from his sister more precise instructions as to the manner in which he could serve the baroness, he sent a request to the Superior, whoever she might be, for permission to see sister Martha.

'Sister Martha is not visible,' was the reply brought back by the porteress.

He questioned this nun, in order to learn if this refusal was owing to a general rule or a particular prohibition, but the woman refused to reply.

'Well, then,' he replied, 'if sister Martha is not visible to her brother, the Prince of Puzzano, inquire if sister Claude is visible to the shepherd Pastourel.'

The nun retired, and returning in a moment, said:

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'She whom you have named sister Claude, who is now our Superior, is not visible.'

'Well, then!' rejoined Pastourel, 'since sister Claude is the Superior, and as it is she, doubtless, who forbids or permits the others in this house to receive those who visit them, say to her, that I wish to see sister Martha—that I am resolved to see her—that I am not a man to be stopped by the walls of a convent—and that I will enter it forcibly, if I cannot otherwise see my sister.'

The nun had listened to Pastourel with a coolness which was not in the slightest degree disturbed by the threats of the pilgrim; and Giacomo, who had yielded to a hasty impulse of anger, thinking that he might succeed better by stratagem, added:

'Say also to sister Claude, that events are passing at the castle of La Roque, of which it is necessary that she should be informed.'

The nun retired without replying, and presently returned with this answer:

'The violence with which the house of the Lord is threatened brings no fear to those who inhabit it; and as to our worthy Superior, no tie now binds her to the world upon which she has turned her back; and all which passes there should remain unknown to her.'

A flush of anger and mortification rose to Pastourel's cheek at these words. The voice of repentance had begun to murmur in his bosom, but it was drowned by the promptings of pride. That pride which had taken delight in influencing the destinies of others, in shaping them to his will, in suspending them—controlling them—this pride still swayed him; he felt humiliated at the thought of leaving the convent to seek out Jean Couteau or Don Jose, to say: 'I have tried to rescue Charlotte, and I cannot!'

We are unable to say what resolution Pastourel would have formed, if an auxiliary had not suddenly arrived, upon whom he was far from counting.

As a nun came to inform him that he must leave the convent before nightfall, the bell of the outer gate of the monastery was rung, and Pastourel, to his astonishment, beheld Charlotte enter, escorted by three men. One of these men was the criminal judge—the two others, his colleagues.

Pastourel advanced with curiosity, and remarked upon the countenance of Charlotte an expression of anger and of resolution which convinced him that she would not submit to the disgrace with which she was threatened, without defending herself to the last extremity; and while the porteress went to inform the Superior of this new visitor, he approached the young girl, who did not recognise him in his pilgrim's garb, and said, hastily:

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'The Superior of this convent is your mother, the Baroness de la Roque.'

Then, as the judge drew near to hear what the stranger was saying to the prisoner, Pastourel added:

'I have come here to see my sister, who is confined in this house under the name of sister Martha; they have refused my request, and I was begging this young girl to tell her that I am here, and that it is most important for the safety of those who are most dear to her that I should see her. I will venture also to pray you, sir, to intercede for me with the Superior, for I suppose you are about to be admitted to her presence.'

'You will see herself, sir, said the judge, 'for she will come to receive her whom I am about to entrust to her care.'

In truth, a moment after, the Superior, accompanied by four sisters, appeared at the principal door of the inner building. The judge and his colleagues bent their knees respectfully, while the Superior gave them her blessing, and the judge then read aloud the following document:—

'On this day, to wit, the 21st of August, 1724, I, Normand, criminal judge of the bailiwick of Foix, accompanied by my two colleagues, have at the request of Baron de la Reque, placed in the hands of Dame Agatha—'

The judge paused, and said:

'I was ignorant that the convent had a new Superior.'

'Write Claude,' replied the Superior in a solemn voice, undisturbed by the slightest emotion.

The judge changed the name and resumed:—

'I have placed in the hands of Dame Claude, Superior of the convent of St. Benoit, the demoiselle Charlotte de la Roque, that she may remain here confined until it is the pleasure of her father to remove her, in which case Dame Claude engages to restore her at the simple demand of the said Sieur Baron de la Roque.'

The document having been read, the judge continued:

'Will you receive the prisoner and sign this paper?'

'It is my duty to do so,' said the Superior.

She signed the document without the slightest change in the icy coldness of her features, and when the associate judges had signed it as witnesses, the Superior said to Charlotte:

'Enter, my daughter.'

This title was not that which a mother gives to her child. The Superior called Charlotte her daughter as she called Pastourel her brother, because it was the consecrated word. Giacomo now advanced, and said, with an air of profound reverence:

'Madam, I have requested to see sister Martha.'

'Sister Martha is in the hall of the penitents—the rules do not admit it.'

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'In that case, madam, it is you to whom I would speak.'

'I desire to hear nothing of worldly matters.'

And, directing Charlotte to precede her, she entered the convent and the door was closed. A moment after a collation was served up before the judges in that part of the *communes* where Pastourel had been lodged. After two hours of repose the judge was about to return home, when new comers prevented his departure as well as that of Pastourel. These new comers were D'Auterive, Bernard and Galidou. But before we recount the motives which led to their arrival, we must describe the scene which passed in the interior of the convent.

CHAPTER XXXV.

When a person, in Charlotte's position, entered the convent, the custom, if not the rules, required that she should pass a kind of examination of conscience before the Superior, who treated her more or less rigorously, according to the degree of penitence which the prisoner seemed to manifest; for young girls of rank were never imprisoned in this manner unless for some grave offence.

We have alluded to the imperturbability with which the baroness heard the name of the maiden who was thus placed in her keeping. Was her indifference a mask with which she had learned to hide the most violent emotions? or was her heart so hardened in the exercise of her monastic duties that she required no effort to conceal them.

The sisters of the convent of St. Benoit were unable to decide, for mother Claude, turning towards them, said in a calm and icy tone:

'I am about to interrogate this young girl according to usage, and I will afterwards inform you as to the manner in which she must be treated.'

The nuns bent their heads, and the Superior said to Charlotte:

'Follow me, my daughter.'

She led the way, ascended the stairs with a slow and firm step, entered the cell from which the corpse of the previous Superior had been removed in order to be placed in the chapel, and taking a seat, she signed to Charlotte to draw near, and said to her in a stern and severe voice:

'For what fault have you been brought here?'

Charlotte did not reply; she gazed attentively at this woman, whose gleaming eyes expressed neither curiosity, nor agitation, nor anger. This woman was her mother; she could not but know that it was her daughter whom she thus addressed, and still nothing seemed to indicate it. Notwithstanding the calculating selfishness of Charlotte's character, her heart was not destitute of those lively impulses which are

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ever found in youth, and she felt deeply agitated at finding herself in the presence of her mother, whom she had not seen for sixteen years.

Absorbed in these thoughts, more troubled than she was willing to appear at this chilling reception, Charlotte did not reply, but remained with her eyes fixed upon the Superior.

'Have you heard me?' rejoined the latter sternly, 'or do you refuse to answer?'

The severity with which this question was uttered irritated Charlotte, whose emotions of tenderness were far from being intense, and she replied:

'I have heard you madam, and I am ready to answer you.'

'For what fault have you been brought here?'

'For the fault of another, madam,' said Charlotte.

'It is the usual answer of the guilty.'

'On this occasion, madam,' replied Charlotte, haughtily, 'it is the answer of an innocent person.'

The baroness manifested no emotion, but she did not at once reply; it seemed as if she reflected upon the words which she was about to utter.

'The Baron de la Roque,' she said at last, 'is sometimes violent, hasty, unjust, and it is, perhaps, an impulse of unreflecting anger which has urged him to this act of severity.'

'The Baron de la Roque has been just in his conduct towards me, madam,' replied Charlotte, with a smile of keen disdain; 'he has even displayed clemency. It is neither through his fault nor through mine that I am here.'

A glance of more than usual brightness was the only sign which admonished Charlotte that her words had reached their aim, but the Superior controlled herself, and rejoined:

'If it suits you to make a mystery of the motives which have led to your imprisonment, it is neither my duty nor have I the power to wrest your secret from you. I will order, therefore, that they lead you to the cell which you are to occupy.'

'On the contrary, madam, it suits me to inform you of my secret; my mother is confined in this convent; you know it, for you have heard my name, and as that which has led me hither concerns her, I do not think that I can ask counsel from any one more properly than from yourself, as to the manner in which I should conduct myself towards her.'

All the baroness' self-control could not disguise the change in her voice, as she replied:

'You know the respect which a daughter owes to her mother.'

'As I know,' said Charlotte, 'the affection which a mother owes to her daughter.'

Had the baroness been standing, her limbs would perhaps

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have failed her at the tone of menace in which these words were uttered.

'What have you to claim from your mother's affection?' said the baroness.

'That which is her duty before man and before God,' said Charlotte, 'the truth!'

'The truth,' replied the Superior; 'explain yourself; enough of evasions! speak, and I will answer in place of your mother.'

'Do so, madam,' replied Charlotte, 'and tell me what it is my duty to do under the circumstances in which I am placed.'

Charlotte's features assumed an expression of cruel malignity, and she continued, gazing steadfastly at the baroness:

'I am the daughter of the Baroness de la Roque, madam, but I am not the daughter of the Baron de la Roque.'

Charlotte paused; the Superior, with a quick tone responded:

'Proceed!'

'He who is my father, Comte Jose de Frias, disclosed this secret to me.'

The lips of the baroness moved convulsively, and she muttered a few words which Charlotte could not hear.

Proceed!' she said, raising her voice.

'The Comte de Frias, after having convinced me of the truth of this secret by a Solitary of the mountain, whom my mother must remember under the name of Pastourel, and who is no other than the Prince of Puzzano, the Comte de Frias, I say, my real father, madam, has easily persuaded me that it is disgraceful and dishonest to keep a name which does not belong to me, and to claim the heritage of wealth, which ought not to be mine; and prompted by the voice of conscience, I resolved to fly with him. But at the moment when were about to depart, we were surprised and arrested; then, madam, the Baron de la Roque has viewed as a crime that flight which was but an expiation; has seen a lover in the father, whom I was about to follow, and he has offered me the alternative of a marriage with the Comte de Frias, or of public dishonour, by a suit in which the Comte will be accused of having induced me to elope with him from my father's house.'

Charlotte paused to watch the effect of this disclosure, but the baroness, with that calmness which so well concealed her emotions, replied:

'Wo to the daughter who opens her ear to calumny against her mother!—punishment will not fail to follow.'

At these words it was Charlotte's turn to hesitate: she could not imagine that a mother could hear an accusation like that from the lips of a daughter without displaying some

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sign of emotion; and she said to herself: 'She is not my mother.'

'The fault that you have committed, young girl,' continued the Superior, 'is unpardonable, and you will never leave this convent.'

At these words all Charlotte's violence, all her pride, was aroused, and she cried:

'I am here under the protection of the laws, and I shall leave it upon a requisition from the Baron de la Roque.'

'You will never leave these walls,' responded the baroness.

The tone of menace in which these words were uttered, instead of terrifying Charlotte, restored her energy, which was for a moment shaken, and she replied, with a scornful smile:

'Besides, madam, if they have imposed upon my credulity; if the Comte de Frias has lied to me to induce me to quit France, all can easily be arranged. Let my mother swear before God, that Don Jose's words are false; that I am not his daughter; and I will myself solicit this marriage, which alone can restore my honour, for this shall not be slandered.'

'You demand an oath before God?' said the baroness, in a gloomy voice.

'With her hand upon the crucifix,' replied Charlotte, 'and I will believe that I have been deceived.'

The baroness gazed long and steadfastly at Charlotte, and said at last, in a hollow and stifled voice:

'Do you know to whom you are speaking, unhappy child?'

'To the Superior of the Convent of Saint Benoit,' said Charlotte.

'You are speaking to your mother,' cried the baroness, with flashing eyes.

'I should not have supposed it from the reception which she has given me, for she knew that she was speaking to her daughter.

'Yes,' replied the baroness, whose features were agitated by a convulsive tremor, 'yes, it is a just retribution! On the day when I believed I had acquired pardon for my fault by fifteen years of penitence, of maceration and prayer—on this day it rises up to reproach me; and called up by whom? Oh, God! by my daughter!'

Charlotte was somewhat moved by this manifestation of despair; she took a step towards the baroness, saying, in a softer tone:

'My mother!'

The baroness repulsed her with an imperious gesture.

'I am no longer a mother,' she said, 'I have never been one!'

She arose, and stretching her arms towards heaven exclaimed:

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'Is this justice, oh God? Thou hast promised absolution to repentance, pardon to penitence; and to what have served all the fair years of my youth, lost, stifled, withered in this retreat. No, it is not justice. Thou dost allot too fair a portion to crime, that Thy servants should not follow after it; Thou dost not measure the trial to the strength;—and what wonder that the victim falls? Well, so be it—so be it!'

Her mother's wildness terrified Charlotte, and she said in a hurried tone:

'The secret has never left my bosom, madam.'

The baroness gazed upon her with fearful anxiety, and after a short silence, replied:

'Is this true?'

'I swear it! If it were otherwise, would I have been dragged hither, sullied and dishonoured?'

'And still,' rejoined the baroness, 'this secret which you boast of having kept so carefully, you disclosed to the Superior of this convent.'

'I knew in whose presence I stood, madam.'

The Superior started backward in terror, and said, while a tear trembled upon her eyelids:

'You knew this, and you spoke to me as you did.'

'I regulated my words by yours,' replied Charlotte, boldly.

'Oh,' cried the baroness, 'in what way of crime and vice have you been reared by him whose name you bear?'

'My conduct is pure, madam!' exclaimed Charlotte; 'there is not an hour of my life that I fear to submit to the judgment of mankind.'

'Even this hour?' said the baroness.

'I am innocent, madam; and I have come here to request my mother to give the proof of my innocence to those who accuse me.'

'Even at the price of her honour?' said the baroness.

'Should mine remain sullied?' replied Charlotte, coldly.

'But do you know,' cried Paula, who now wept freely, 'do you know what I have suffered for these fifteen years, in order to preserve that honour which you would wrest from me? Do you know what it is to live, young, beautiful, with a heart full of passion in this cold and fearful solitude? to be enclosed in this tomb, more narrow than the grave, and which nothing can penetrate but sorrow? Do you know the strength which I have needed to endure this trial without hope, without solace, without affection? Do you know all this, and yet venture to appear here, to bid me resign the fruit of all these fearful sacrifices?'

'I do not know, madam,' replied Charlotte, 'the strength that is required to conceal a fault of which one is guilty, but I have been obliged to learn what firmness is necessary to support a misfortune which has been bequeathed to me by a

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a fault of which I am innocent. You have lived in penitence madam; you have imposed upon yourself severe mortifications; I have been compelled to submit to those which have been inflicted upon me by your husband, who struck the child because the mother had escaped him; you have sacrificed me to the phantom of your honour, and should I spare you, and leave in doubt the purity of mine? I am an unworthy child, perhaps; but what could she expect who has been an unworthy mother? You have been unwilling to endure dishonour: I also am unwilling to endure it. Let God judge between us.'

At this reply the baroness rose suddenly erect, and remained for a moment motionless. She stammered a few words, among which Charlotte could distinguish the following:

'My God! my God! wilt thou never pardon me?'

Then her eyes rolled, a few convulsive sobs broke from her breast, and, as if stricken by lightning, she fell suddenly upon the marble pavement of her cell—She was dead!

At this spectacle Charlotte uttered a piercing shriek, and called for help. A few nuns entered, and raised the body. The face was livid, and frightfully distorted, the limbs stiffened and rigid as iron, the hands clenched, the eyes open and almost starting from their sockets.

Charlotte, overcome with horror, stood gazing at the hideous corpse, while the sisters questioned her concerning the cause of this fearful occurrence. She did not hear them; her eyes seemed fastened upon that face, the expression of which appeared still so implacable; and when, at last, she recovered from her stupor, the first words which escaped her lips were these:

'Who now will prove my innocence?'

Paula's body had in the meanwhile been deposited upon the same bed from which, a few hours before, they had removed the lifeless remains of Armande, and one of the nuns having approached Charlotte, said to her in a solemn tone:

'My daughter, we permit you to pray near the corpse of your mother, until the certificate of her death is drawn up, which you will sign, for you alone were present at her decease.'

The nuns now retired, and left Charlotte alone with the lifeless remains of her mother. Soon the chapel resounded with the same chaunts which had been heard on the preceding evening, and the knell proclaimed that another of the nuns of the convent had departed this life.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

The bell had just begun to toll when Bernard, Galidou, and D'Auterive reached the convent. They were the bearers of an order from the Baron de la Roque, demanding the restoration of his daughter; they placed it in the hands of the criminal judge, who at once desired to see the Superior. It was then that the porteress announced that she was dead.

Bernard requested permission to see his mother. This permission could only be granted by a new Superior, and he was obliged to wait until the chapter had made their choice. Pastourel calmed the impatience of the young marquis, who seemed resolved to force his way into the monastery. His heart was filled with a fearful presentiment, yet he durst not accuse Charlotte, who, as the amorous Bernard declared, was the object of base calumnies, and he inquired the reasons which had induced the Baron de la Roque to retract his order. The following account was given him by Bernard.

The reader will remember, doubtless, that at the moment of Don Jose's arrest, he had requested an interview with Bernard, which the latter had promised him. The Baron de la Roque had heard the promise, but he had not opposed its execution. Solely occupied with his vengeance, he saw but one alternative: either Don Jose will confess the truth, and the proud Paula is ruined together with her lover, or he will be silent, and Charlotte is ruined together with her father.

When Bernard entered the presence of the man, whom he still knew only under the name of Vasconcellos, he had provided means for his escape, and had brought two swords. The young marquis showed them to him, as he entered the chamber in which Vasconcelles was confined, and said:

'It is with these, sir, that we will explain matters.'

Vasconcellos's sole reply was a smile of disdain.

'You are afraid then, Master Vasconcellos,' said Bernard.

'Marquis de Velay,' replied Don Jose, in a stern voice, 'I am called the Comte de Frias; you cannot be a stranger to that name, and you should know that none of those who bear it, bear it unworthily.'

'The Comte de Frias, say you? The Comte de Frias was my father's friend. He had a son?'

'Don Jose de Frias. I am he.'

'Who lived for many a year in the castle of La Roque?'

'The same.'

'And who disappeared at the time when the Baroness de la Roque retired to the convent of Saint Benoit?'

'I expected to tell you my history, marquis, but you seem well acquainted with it.'

'And what is this history to our affair, sir,' replied the

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marquis, 'unless it be that instead of supposing that I am about to measure swords with an adventurer, I may know that I am about to contend against an equal.'

'M. de Velay,' rejoined Don Jose, 'can you not comprehend me? If I have disclosed myself to you, if I have recalled to your remembrance my sojourn in the castle of La Roque, and my disappearance at the time when the unhappy Paula retired from the world, can you not comprehend, I say, that in all these circumstances, there may be something which can explain this flight of Charlotte's, otherwise than by a love which is culpable, and of which you have cause to be jealous.'

Bernard well understood the meaning of these words, and he reflected carefully before replying:

'You have long deferred the disclosure of this secret,' he said at last; 'had you done so sooner, all this would not have happened, neither would you have run any risk in doing so. But is it not an invention to free yourself from the danger which threatens you?'

'And what is this danger which has such terrors for me?'

'That of rendering me an account for your elopement with Charlotte.'

'Well, then, Marquis de Velay,' replied Don Jose, 'let it be understood that I am ready to render this account, either as a father or a lover; and, that settled, I do not hesitate to tell you, that I depend upon you to wrest Charlotte from the violence and brutality of the Baron de la Roque.

'This violence and this brutality need not be feared now, for Mademoiselle de la Roque (I must still call her by this name,) is at present at the convent of Saint Benoit.'

'She must be set at liberty then, sir,' replied Don Jose.

'And with what intent?'

After these preliminary explanations, Don Jose finished by describing clearly to Bernard, the position in which he stood; he convinced the marquis that he had been used as an instrument of the baron's vengeance, who was resolved either to ruin Charlotte or Paula, and Bernard at last engaged to liberate the maiden from her confinement.

This interview was long, and it had not yet ended, when Galidou, D'Auterive and Barati, arrived at the castle, hoping to find the criminal judge still there, while Jean Couteau escorted the Comtesse D'Auterive to her dwelling. They now heard the cause of the judge's absence. We request the reader's permission to describe the scene which occurred in reference to this subject; it turns, indeed, upon facts already known to him, but it will add a most striking trait to the different characters which we have endeavoured to depict in this narrative.

The three new comers had been admitted into the baron's presence, who requested to know what led them in search of

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the criminal judge at that hour. D'Auterive had given his uncle a somewhat exaggerated account of the violence which had been inflicted upon them by the shepherd Pastourel, an account in which the baron had not placed the slightest confidence, for when D'Auterive had concluded, he said to him, in a tone of mockery:

'And what motive led you to Pastourel, my dear nephew?'

'To obtain certain information concerning a person in the neighbourhood.'

'*Peste!*' said the baron, 'since you came here to give your consent to Bernard's marriage, I should think that the information which you first needed should concern me, or, at least, my daughter, and I think, nephew, that our acquaintance is of too old a date to leave you in ignorance as to myself.'

'And if it were so, uncle,' said D'Auterive, 'a marriage is too serious an affair to be arranged in haste, and I do not think it useless to inquire into the conduct of the maiden to whom I was about to entrust a young man—'

'Whom you love as a son, although you are scarcely entitled by your age to do so.'

'What mean you, uncle?'

'Ah!' replied the old man, with a savage laugh, 'it is a consolation to know that the most skilful and crafty belong to the great fraternity. What say you, master Barati?'

'To each his calamity, baron, and to each his vengeance. I have journeyed two hundred leagues to reach mine, and it will not escape me.'

'I have not left my house for mine,' said the baron, 'and I hold it sure.'

'Explain yourself, uncle,' said D'Auterive, quickly.

'Do you then know nothing of what has passed here this evening?'

'We were told,' replied D'Auterive, 'but I did not comprehend it.'

'How! you do not comprehend that this Vasconcellos is Don Jose himself.'

At this disclosure a part of the baron's plan was unveiled before the eyes of D'Auterive; but the old man did not give him time to calculate the probabilities of its success, but proceeded to develope it with that savage joy which he had displayed to Jean Couteau. In truth, it seemed impossible that his vengeance could escape him. But for his blindness, he would have felt flattered by the gleam of admiration which lighted up the features of old Barati. But the latter was unable to control the emotion which agitated him, and he said:

'Oh, you at least will strike all the guilty ones!'

'Ah! old councillor,' said the baron, 'I would give up two

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of them to be able to seize the third; I would let Don Jose and Charlotte go, if I could but strip from Paula that mask of virtue which covers her, if I could but tear her from that convent, where, like your wife, who is now the superior there, she has gained so fair a name for sanctity.'

'What?' cried Galidou, 'my mother is still living, and I did not know it!'

A gleam of hate and vengeance seemed at once to light up the spirit of Barati. Excited as he was by the baron's diabolical craft, and resolved not to be surprised by him in his schemes of vengeance, he replied, in a tone of hypocritical anger:

'Yes, she lives, and I have concealed you from her, lest she might testify that you are in truth the son of this wretch Giacomo, and thus defeat the investigation which will call upon him to prove that you are not a suppositious child.'

It was apparently an act of great imprudence on the part of Barati, to inform Galidou in what manner he could escape the danger by which he was threatened; even in case that the restoration of the prince of Puzzano to his rights should be revoked, he was not the less his son, and according to that great principle of the law: *Infans pro nato habetur quoties de rebus suis agitur*— a natural and not an adulterine son.

Barati did not explain himself farther, for he observed the air of anxiety which was visible upon Galidou's features, and he thought himself sure of success.

'Good! good!' he said to himself, 'I will cause the mother to be disgraced by the son; he will demand from her the avowal of her fault, in order to profit by it.'

It was at this moment that Bernard requested to speak with the baron.

'Ha!' cried the old man, 'here comes the precious instrument of my vengeance; he is the man to aid you in obtaining yours—let me contrive it.'

Bernard entered, and commenced by saying that he had accused Charlotte unjustly, that she was innocent, that he would warrant for her innocence, and that, to convince the baron, he declared himself ready to espouse her.

The baron listened patiently, and then said:

'This devotion is praiseworthy, Marquis de Velay, but it proves one thing; namely, that you are very credulous, and very much in love.'

'No, sir,' said Bernard, 'I am not a man easy to be deceived, and if Vasconcellos' explanations had not been satisfactory to my honour, I would not have offered to become a warrant for them.'

'It is possible that they may be satisfactory to you, marquis, but I think it necessary that they should be so to me likewise,'

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replied the baron. 'I will judge of them when you have rehearsed them to me.'

'I have told you, sir, that I am ready to espouse her,' rejoined Bernard, 'and this, as I think, should satisfy in all points, the honour of a father.'

'D'Auterive, impelled by the blind avarice which he hoped to satisfy by Charlotte's ruin, had the imprudence to interfere in this discussion and said:

'But do you think that I would consent to this marriage after the accusation has been brought against Mademoiselle de la Roque? I speak it with regret at my uncle's presence, but I should abuse the confidence which the duke, your father, has placed in me, if I were to give my consent, after this public scandal.'

This poor D'Auterive imagined that he was furthering the designs of his uncle, as well as his own interests by compelling Bernard to reveal the secret, which had so suddenly quieted his suspicions of Charlotte, but the baron was unwilling to receive this aid which would place the marquis in a position of superiority towards him, and he replied in a mild and hypocritical tone:

'And then, M. de Velay, I should forget my duty as a father should I consent to this marriage, for I must needs say that your own name is not free from all stain of this kind, that the offer of your hand would be a sufficient answer to the slanders of the world. Sons are apt to inhabit the weakness of their parents, and they would say, perhaps, that the Marquis de Velay had espoused a woman who was dishonoured, as the father looked tamely upon the dishonour of his wife.'

'Who dares to say that?' cried Bernard violently, 'it is a falsehood, a base calumny! and coming from you it is an act of cowardice, for your age and helplessness shield you against my anger.'

'*Ma foi*, marquis,' replied the baron, 'since you set yourself up for a defender of maidens who elope with their lovers, and of dames who have entertained gallants, you will find some one here to answer you.'

'Who?' exclaimed Bernard.

'Why, my nephew, comte D'Auterive, who knows better than any one else that I utter no calumny against the duchess, your mother.'

At this moment Bernard recalled to mind the singular smile which had escaped Pastourel, when he confessed to him his own *liaison* with the comtesse D'Auterive, and the words which he had uttered:

'It is heaven's vengeance!'

His anger was strangely soothed by this recollection; he was embarrassed in spite of himself as to the tone which he should

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assume in demanding satisfaction of an injury from a man upon whom he had inflicted an equal one.

'Ha, baron!' cried Barati, 'we need not complain of the children who do not belong to us, when those whose legitimacy is incontestible, hesitate to defend their mothers.'

'The marquis hesitates,' said D'Auterive, with some agitation, 'because he does not credit the injurious words of my uncle. The Duchess de Nevres merits universal respect, and I should be more infamous than Bernard, if I suffered her to be calumniated.'

Galidou now interposed in his turn.

'Bravo, comte D'Auterive!' he cried, 'you have just taken a great burden from the heart of the marquis by releasing him from the necessity of calling you to an account for such an injury, for it is hard to be compelled to expose one's life when one is about to espouse a young and beautiful maiden.'

'Marquis of Veroni,' said Bernard, with a lordly air, 'if I knew by what right you bear this title, I would teach you to swallow your insolence at the point of the sword.'

'If proof is all that you need, I beg you to demand it of Pastourel. He will teach you that we are near enough akin, and that you cannot well compromise your rank by a meeting with me.'

'*Peste*! and what is Pastourel to me, sir?'

'Why, I should think,' replied Galidou, 'that the Prince of Puzzano, your uncle, ought to know better than any one else whether his own son is of a birth sufficiently noble to measure swords with his nephew.'

'*Peste*! my uncle Giacomo!' cried Bernard.

'Yes, truly,' said D'Auterive, 'and it was for this reason that I visited him, to obtain his opinion as to your marriage.'

'And he is the father of the Marquis of Veroni?'

'Yes,' said Barati, 'and it was for this that I repaired to the ruins to take vengeance upon him.'

'*Ma foi*, cousin!' said Bernard, gaily, 'excuse the tone in which I spoke to you,' he then added, laughing, 'since you have observed my hesitation to quarrel with the comte, I ought to explain; having had the honour to be on quite a familiar footing with Madam D'Auterive, I thought our accounts about even, and it seemed to me ungenerous to call upon him to pay the cost of this explanation into the bargain. Now that he is informed of it, I am at his orders.'

As Bernard spoke, the Baron de la Roque shook in his chair with laughter.

'How! is it so? my nephew too—it is admirable! it is charming! it is charming!' and he laughed so that the hall echoed again. Galidou and Bernard followed his example, while D'Auterive turning furiously to Barati, exclaimed:

'It is you, who, by giving me a creature picked up in the

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street, have exposed me to this dishonour; she has not belied the baseness of her birth.'

'And the Duchess de Nevres,' replied Barati, 'and the Baroness de la Roque and Armande de Lostanges, were they picked up in the street? They were of the high noblesse, and you know what they have done.'

'If he knows that,' said Bernard, 'to the devil with all promises! Baron de la Roque, Charlotte is not guilty, for—'

'A word suffices,' said the baron, 'M. de Frias has told you all.'

'Yes.'

'You are ready to affirm it, and repeat it before witnesses?'

'Yes.'

'Well, then,' said the baron, 'that is all that I require. Charlotte shall be restored to liberty. Draw up an order directing them to place her in your hands. I can sign it in spite of my blindness. But, remember, that it will be necessary for you to repeat the accusation against Frias and the baroness before the criminal judge.'

'I will do so.'

'Nephew,' said the baron, turning to D'Auterive, 'I hope that you will be so obliging as to defer your vengeance until this evidence has been received.'

D'Auterive, who had not spoken for some moments, replied:

'Uncle, it would be perhaps more suitable if you were to entrust me with the order for Charlotte's release.'

'Be it so. I will keep M. de Velay here, and then I shall be sure that there will be no quarreling.'

'Pardon me,' said Bernard, 'but I wish to go to the convent of Saint Benoit. I must speak with my mother.'

'And I will accompany you,' said Galidou, 'to prevent mischief.'

'Must you also see your mother?' said Barati.

'Perhaps so, sir,' said Galidou.

The three now took their departure from the castle, leaving the Baron de la Roque and Barati alone. That which took place at the convent after their arrival there, will inform the reader of the projects with these personages had formed upon the road.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

As we have said, Pastourel, before informing the new comers of that which had passed in the convent, wished to learn the motives by which the baron had been so easily induced to give an order for Charlotte's release. Bernard informed him; and the Prince of Puzzano now comprehended that the baron was

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more eager to execute his vengeance against Paula than to punish Charlotte. He wished also to know what had brought D'Auterive to the convent, and why Galidou had accompanied them, but they were both less communicative than Bernard. The comte gave the reason which he had given to the baron, and Galidou pretended that he was curious to see the convent, without betraying the slightest intimation of his knowledge of his mother's existence and of his desire to see her.

In the meanwhile the chapel resounded with the chaunts announcing the election of a new superior. Pastourel had requested the judge and the gardener not to inform the new comers of the sudden and unexpected death of the two Superiors, and he had under various pretexts delayed them from requesting admission.

During the interval he had sent a billet to the new Superior, in which he had explained, doubtless, the motive of his visit. A messenger now came to inform those who waited that they should send in their requests to the Superior, and that she would answer them. Each one sent in his own—that is to say, D'Auterive demanded simply to speak with the Superior, Bernard to see the Duchess de Nevres, and Galidou to see Madame Armande De Lostanges. The criminal judge transmitted the order for Charlotte's release. To the great astonishment of all, they at once received answer that they could enter the convent, and they were immediately led to the chapel.

A melancholy spectacle met their eyes as they entered. In the middle of the nave stood two coffins, and in these two coffins lay two bodies with their hands crossed upon the breast and their faces uncovered. At the foot of these two coffins, a woman clad in the garb of a nun, but wrapped in a long black veil, was kneeling in prayer. At their head, the Superior herself, known by her cross of gold, was seated on an elevated chair, where she had just received the homage of the sisters of the community. Her face was covered with a long veil. Upon a bench on either side of the coffins, were ranged the nuns, all veiled.

This gloomy spectacle struck the three new comers with secret terror, and Pastourel himself paused, when upon the point of breaking the silence. The Superior addressed him:

'Pilgrim,' she said, 'you have come to this house to speak with sister Martha. What have you to say to her? She is present, and will hear you.'

'When those who have followed me,' replied Pastourel, 'have told their errand, I will speak, for I am too old to be impatient, as they must be.'

The Superior made no remark concerning this reserve, and resumed with the same solemnity:

'Comte D'Auterive, you have requested an interview with

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the Superior of this house; she is before you, she hears you, speak!'

D'Auterive was deeply moved. The Superior, being seated, as we have said, at the head of the two coffins, while the nuns were ranged on either side, it followed that the strangers, among whom was D'Auterive, stood at the foot of the two biers, so that the words which they uttered, passed over the two corpses, which separated them. D'Auterive, we say, was deeply moved, and was for some moments unable to control his agitation.

At last he spoke:

'In the first place, I have come as the bearer of this order from my uncle, which reclaims his daughter, who, owing to a deplorable error, has been confined in this convent.'

The Superior replied:

'You hear, Charlotte de la Roque, they have come to restore you to liberty. Do you persist in the resolution with which you were inspired by the fearful lesson which came to you from God's hand? Do you wish to return to the world? Speak the word, rise, go, you are free!'

None of the sisters moved, and D'Auterive, having somewhat regained his composure, said:

'Is Charlotte present?'

No one answered.

'Who can assure me of it? Her mother dwells within these walls; her mother may think that the motive which restores her daughter to liberty, will be prejudicial to herself, and perhaps she retains her here, to shield herself from the justice of men.'

'The Baroness de la Roque,' replied the Superior, 'has now to answer only to the justice of God.'

'We shall know how to tear her from this house when the time arrives.'

The Superior extended her hand, and pointing toward one of the biers, she said:

'Will you tear away yon corpse, then, and yonder coffin? There she lies—she, whom you would deliver over to the justice of men.'

D'Auterive remained silent, and the Superior continued:

'And now, Charlotte de la Roque, since this man doubts of your presence here, speak! what is your resolve?'

The nun, who was kneeling at the foot of the coffin, rose:

'Remove your veil,' said the Superior.

Charlotte raised her veil. Four hours passed in this house had added ten years to her existence. A livid paleness was spread over her features; her eyes, red and swollen, had lost their soft and limpid light; a feverish tremor shook her lips and eyelids, and gave her the aspect of a woman upon the verge of madness.

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'You see, Charlotte,' resumed the Superior, 'you have but to speak; no force controls you; a magistrate, a kinsman, a lover, are standing near you; they will protect you; they will lead you hence. Do you consent to accompany them?'

'No,' replied Charlotte, in a gloomy tone.

The criminal judge advanced, and said to her:

'Do you refuse of your own free will?'

'Yes.'

'They have used neither prayers nor threats?'

'No.'

'But still,' cried D'Auterive, impatiently, 'this new purpose must have a motive.'

Charlotte pointed towards her mother's coffin, and replied:

'That is the motive which has dictated my resolve. Say to the Baron de la Roque that his wife is dead, and that her daughter will never aid him to dishonour her memory.'

'Charlotte!' cried Bernard, 'have you forgotten my love so quickly?'

'A love which plays the spy, which accuses, which brands with shame. I will never forget it, never, Marquis de Velay!'

Bernard resolved to appeal to every tie, in order to bend her resolution, replied:

'But the Comte Don Jose de Frias awaits you.'

'I no longer know the Comte de Frias.'

'What! your—'

'Marquis de Velay,' said the Superior, interrupting him, 'Mademoiselle de la Roque has informed you that she does not know the Comte de Frias.'

'I know none of you any longer,' said Charlotte.

She dropped her veil, kneeled, and leaning her head upon her mother's coffin, renewed her prayers with fervour.

'Comte D'Auterive, have you no other request to make?'

'Pardon me, madam,' replied D'Auterive, 'but I would venture to solicit the favour of explaining this request to yourself alone.'

'It is impossible,' replied the Superior; 'I wish that all that passes in this house should be known to the sisters who are confided to my care.'

'But still,' replied D'Auterive, 'I am unwilling to speak in the presence of these persons who have accompanied me hither.'

'Let those retire in whose presence you are unwilling to impart this request.'

D'Auterive turned. Beside the nuns, there were present in the chapel, Pastourel, Galidou, Bernard, and the criminal judge.

'Well, it is no matter! these know what I have to say to you,' replied D'Auterive, pointing to the three former; 'and, as to you, worthy judge, it will be necessary, doubtless, that

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you should be informed of it, and it is as well perhaps that you should be so now as at a later period. Let all remain, then, for I am not one of those who seek their vengeance by obscure intrigues: that which I demand, I demand aloud.'

'Speak, then, Comte D'Auterive,' said the Superior.

'Well, madam, I have come here to demand from you both an asylum and a prison for a woman who has failed in her duties as a wife.'

'Who is this woman?' asked the duchess.

'The Comtesse D'Auterive, madam.'

'The Comtesse D'Auterive!' replied the Superior, while Bernard did not exhibit the slightest emotion.

The Superior kept silence for a moment, as if she expected to hear some voice raised in remonstrance, and then said:

'Does the Comtesse D'Auterive consent to enter this house?'

'I have not inquired her will on this subject,' said the Comte. 'She is guilty, and if she refuses, the law will do me justice; and it is for this reason that I have requested the presence of the criminal judge.'

'But the Comtesse D'Auterive may maintain her innocence,' said the Superior, 'and I cannot receive her until she is found guilty, or has made a confession of her fault.'

'She will make this confession,' said the Comte, 'rest assured of it, madam, for I have already that of her accomplice.'

'And who is the wretch that thus accuses and abandons a woman who has devoted herself to ruin for his sake?' cried the duchess impetuously.

Bernard hung his head at these words, which were uttered in a tone of scorn that could not be mistaken, although the face of the speaker was covered with a veil. A long silence followed this question. The Superior then resumed:

'I knew a wife who was more fortunate than yours. Reproached by her husband, she found in her lover a man who dared to say to the injured spouse that he would not suffer him to dishonour her who bore his name. You know this man and this woman, Comte D'Auterive.'

'Yes, madam,' said the comte.

'And deadly menaces, and vows of eternal hatred, passed between the husband and the lover.'

'It is true, madam.'

'And still, when this woman had voluntarily expiated her fault by retiring from the world, this husband and this lover, influenced by a common interest, forgot, the one the injury which he had received, the other, that which he had inflicted, and to-day they are bound in such ties of amity, that the lover has been entrusted by the husband with an office which clothes him with his authority as a father.'

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No one replied, and the Superior added with a vehemence that astonished all present:

'You are all base and cowardly!'

'Madam!' cried Bernard.

The Superior hastily removed her veil, and added:

'It is I who say it, Marquis de Velay; it is I, your mother; it is I who say to you as I said to Comte D'Auterive, you are base and cowardly; you display courage only against women, whom you ruin, and then abandon to infamy and despair. Comte D'Auterive, you stand here as the representative of the duke, my husband; the friendship which unites you is a disgrace to him as well as to you. Bernard de Velay, you have not a word to utter in favour of the woman you have professed to love; you are the basest of mankind. Go! follow out your plans of vengeance beyond these walls! the Comtesse D'Auterive shall not enter them until the day when your testimony shall have proved her guilt, and then justice shall be done upon you both. So help me heaven!'

'My mother?' stammered Bernard.

'Enough, sir marquis,' replied the Duchess de Nevres, 'enough! And now, Marquis of Veroni, what is your errand here?'

Galidou, vain and presumptuous as he was, had not profited by the scene which had just occurred, and he replied, with his accustomed rudeness:

'I have come to request my mother, Armande de Lostanges, to declare that I am her son, and the son of your brother, Giacomo Spaffa, Prince of Puzzano.'

'You were right, my brother,' said the duchess, 'he has come to demand his mother's dishonour. Well then, wretch, question this corpse, and blessed be God who has removed her from the world so soon! blessed be God, who did not hearken to the wild desire, which tortured her departing spirit, who did not suffer her dying eyes to gaze upon thee! blessed be God, who has spared her a bitter drop in her cup of woe, who has spared her the fate of the unhappy Paula, who listened while a daughter's lips reproached her with her fault, and demanded her dishonour!'

'Yes, yes,' cried Charlotte, in a piercing tone, 'I am guilty! I have committed this crime, and I will remain here to expiate it—yes, yes, I have killed her, killed my mother, and I have merited the curse of God!'

'You can withdraw, sirs,' said the Superior, when this cry of remorse had echoed through the chapel, 'there is still a woman to be ruined. You must be impatient to complete the glorious deed. Go! go!'

She then added:

'My brother, I am ready to listen to you.'

'I have nothing more to say to you, my sister,' said

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Pastourel. 'God seems to have found no refuge for these unhappy women, except by granting them an asylum with him. It is only beyond the grave that one is safe from the malice of men?'

'Repentance, my brother,' said the duchess, 'deep and sincere repentance is the only solace to the sufferer here. Armande died, grieving over her lost youth, over the joys of life, of which her fault had robbed her; Paula perished, smitten in her pride, which would have concealed her error, even at the price of her salvation.'

'Neither the one nor the other had entirely overcome the emotion and the passions of the world. She, whose hopes are placed in God alone, who, confident in him, smiles, while the malice of man blights her earthly joys, and tramples her honour in the dust, she alone, is strong. Hence! and let no one among you ever cross again the threshold of this house!'

They went out, and the chapel was closed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

When Pastourel left the chapel with Galidou, Bernard, and the Comte D'Auterive, the latter expected to hear the old man add some traits of his bitter raillery to the scornful lesson which they had just received from the duchess, but he seemed to have entirely forgotten them. They felt greatly relieved at his silence. D'Auterive and Bernard had good reason to blush, if he had reproached them with the shameful compact, which sealed at once their mutual forgiveness and the ruin of the Comtesse D'Auterive. As for Galidou he had been completely confounded in his brutal projects of ambition, when he found himself before the coffin of that mother from whom he had come to require a solemn declaration of her guilt.

Still when they saw Pastourel walk onward without addressing a word to either of them, without the slightest manifestation of resentment, they became suddenly alarmed; they knew Giacomo too well, they thought, to believe that this conduct was prompted by indifference or disdain. They imagined that he was leaving them to set on foot some secret project against them; they hastened after him by a common impulse, but without imparting to each other their mutual fears.

'Ha! cousin,' he cried, turning to Bernard, 'whither can this old madman be going without saying good-day or good-evening.'

'*Ma foi!*' replied Bernard, displeased at the tone in which he was addressed, 'I know little about it, and care less.'

'You are wrong, marquis,' said D'Auterive. 'He is

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meditating some trick of his trade, and probably one of us will be the victim of it.'

Bernard at once changed his tone, suiting it to the rank of him who addressed him, and replied:

'This man, I say it, although he is my uncle, always has brought, and always will bring misfortune to all connected with him. Do you know that it was he who induced Charlotte to fly with her father, the Comte de Frias; he then is the cause of all this mischief, for if he had not urged her to take this step, I should not have surprised her, and the old Baron de la Roque could not have brought about these calamities.'

'And which after all will be of no use to him.'

'You forget that he holds Don Jose in his hands.'

'And what can he do with him,' said Bernard.

'If he asks counsel of Pastourel,' said Galidou, 'the old Sorcerer will teach him some villany.'

'It is certain that the prince's silence is extraordinary,' cried D'Auterive.

'He has left us without even looking at us,' said Bernard, 'we must beware.'

'What harm can he do us?' said Comte D'Auterive.

'Ah, *pardieu*,' cried Galidou, 'if we knew that we should be as deep as he.'

'See how he quickens his pace,' said Bernard.

'I think he is trying to get back to his den,' cried Galidou, 'when there, he will laugh at us, with his trap-doors, his secret passages, and his whole arsenal of jugglery.'

'True,' said D'Auterive, we were caught there like rats in a trap.'

'We can never deal with him except on fair and open ground.'

Neither Bernard nor D'Auterive replied; their silence satisfied Galidou that the proposal which these words concealed had not startled them; he paused, however, unwilling to say more, and waited for his companions to advance a step to meet him. Bernard was the first to break the silence.

'Look there!' he cried suddenly, 'he turns to the left, he strikes into the path to the ruins; we must know what he is about to do there.'

D'Auterive displayed still more clearly how well he had comprehended Galidou's thought, by exclaiming hastily:

'Take care! the criminal judge cannot be far off.'

Bernard and Galidou turned and beheld at a distance the judge and his two colleagues, pursuing the same road with themselves.

'May the devil take them!' said Bernard in an impatient tone.

'We must be prudent!' said D'Auterive.

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Galidou appeared anxious for a moment, and then cried:

'For all his nimble legs, and his knowledge of the country, I could show you a way which would lead us to the ruins before he could reach them.'

'Indeed!' said Bernard and D'Auterive in one breath.

'Yes,' said Galidou, 'and if the criminal judge has seen him turn to the left, he will see us turn to the right, and if necessary, he can testify that we have followed the road opposite to that taken by the old charlatan.'

This reference to a testimony which might exculpate them, displayed in all its nakedness the project of violence which each secretly harboured against Pastourel.

Giacomo's fate seemed sealed by the projects of these three men; but a mere turn in the conversation afforded him a far better protection than his own skill and courage could have done.

'Are you sure,' said D'Auterive, 'that this road will bring us there before him?'

'I am.'

'Why, then, if Pastourel is in such haste to regain his den, as you say, why has he not taken it?'

'He probably does not know of it.'

'Why not, since you have discovered it?'

'I did not discover it; it was Catharine who showed it to me, when we had our little appointments in the wood. For finding out secret roads, girls in love are more cunning than thieves.'

Bernard gazed at Galidou in astonishment, and said:

'How! Catharine? the beautiful Catharine?'

'Why, yes,' said Galidou, 'and a long time before you, Marquis de Velay; before she was the wife of Pierre Couteau. Poor Pierre Couteau, he is another dupe!'

Bernard laughed aloud, and D'Auterive felt a cold sweat break out at every pore of his body. He then muttered between his closed teeth:

'Yes, yes, the duchess was right! I am base and cowardly!' He then approached Bernard and exclaimed with a violence that seemed bordering upon madness:

'Hold! Marquis de Velay! You are a knave! One of us shall never leave this spot.'

'Ha!' cried the marquis, 'what the d—l is the matter now? what flea has stung you? Have you likewise been a lover of Catharine's, and would you do for her what you have not done for your wife?'

'I have profited by the lesson which your mother gave me, marquis, and the words of this boor have taught me all the baseness of my conduct: you must give me satisfaction on the spot.'

'Willingly,' said the marquis, 'but it is vexatious that in a

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place so retired as this, we have but one witness of our encounter.'

'And so much the more so,' said Galidou, since if the Marquis de Velay does not despatch you, I shall do myself the honour to take his place, for boors of my species are at least equal to marquises of yours.'

'The judge is coming, and he can serve as a second for us all,' said D'Auterive.

'That is to say, arrest us, if he suspects our project: you are mad, Comte D'Auterive!'

The latter did not reply, but began to call with all his strength:

'Prince of Puzzano! prince of Puzzano!'

Giacomo looked around, and D'Auterive made a signal for him to return.

Pastourel hesitated a moment, then descending the mountain, the summit of which he had almost reached, he was in a few moments near those who had called him.

While D'Auterive, Bernard, and Galidou, however, stopped to wait for Pastourel, the judge and his colleagues had kept on their way, so that they reached the group at the moment when Pastourel joined it.

'Comte D'Auterive,' said the judge, 'it is your intention, I suppose, to go and inform the Baron de la Roque of that which has occurred at the convent?'

'It is probable that one of us will do this errand,' said D'Auterive.

'Which of you?' said the judge.

'*Ma foi*,' replied Bernard, in a careless tone, 'heaven only knows; I think you would do well to go yourself, for some of us may be prevented.'

'I will go, Sir,' said Pastourel.

'In that case,' replied the judge, 'request the baron to inform me as soon as possible, if, in the present state of things, he intends to prosecute the complaint which he has entered against Don Jose and Mademoiselle de la Roque.'

'I will inform him of your request,' replied Pastourel, 'but I doubt whether he will now carry that matter farther.'

The judge did not reply. In the long exercise of the duties of his office, this man had acquired that admirable indifference, which looks upon the greatest crimes, the most terrible misfortunes with no other interest than that afforded by the employment which they may render necessary. He turned to D'Auterive, and said, with the most perfect coolness:

'I beg you, also, Comte D'Auterive, to inform me if you intend to enter the complaint against the comtesse of which you have spoken.'

D'Auterive, who imagined that the judge had divined the

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motive which had induced him and his companions to pause upon the road, replied moodily:

'Why do you ask that question, sir?'

'Because,' replied the judge, coolly taking a pinch of snuff, 'because I must inform you that I shall not be at home for a few days. We have made up a hunting party at Mas, and *ma foi*! a little relaxation once a year from the vexations of office is not too much to ask.'

'You can hunt at your ease,' replied Bernard in a tone of railery. 'M. D'Auterive has hit upon a better way to avenge the injury which he has received.'

'Tut—tut—marquis,' said the judge, 'I ought not to know of these things; but between ourselves the comte is right in withdrawing his complaint, for these affairs always produce scandal. Both parties lose some honour by it.'

'I beg you to spare us your advice, sir judge,' replied D'Auterive, 'and you can continue your road.'

'I have no wish to offend you, nor to give you advice, Comte D'Auterive,' said the judge quietly, 'for, although I can divine this better way, which you have chosen to obtain your vengeance, I do not think that you will act more prudently in the one way than in the other.'

'Indeed!' replied the comte.

'It is a duel, is it not? you have resolved upon a duel? Well, what will you gain by it? if you slay your wife's lover, she will hate you a little the more, and if he slays you, you will have served her wishes to a hair.'

Bernard and Galidou laughed aloud, and D'Auterive replied in fury:

'Do you know, sir, that I begin to find your lessons and your counsels far too impertinent, and that, judge though you are, I could make you repent of it.'

'M. D'Auterive,' said the judge, in the calmest tone imaginable. 'I am the head of a family, and that which I say is for your good.'

He paused, and after an interval, during which the different actors in this scene gazed at him inquisitively, to learn the motive which could impel him to meddle in an affair in which he had no concern, he added, taking a large pinch of snuff between his thumb and fingers:

'Finally, Comte D'Auterive, will you permit me to ask you one favour?'

'Do it at once,' said the comte.

'Well then, sir, if you are resolved upon fighting, defer it for eight days, or rather,' he added, quickly, 'fight out of my district. *Ma foi*! if any one is killed in the affair, I would rather that one of my colleagues should be employed to hold an inquest on the body, and to draw up the minutes. *Ma foi*!' *ma foi*! he cried warmly, 'when a man has but a

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single opportunity in a year for recreation, it is unfair to disturb him in it.'

This conclusion so surprised the three antagonists that they knew not what to answer. Pastourel alone gazed at this man with a kind of admiration. Never, in his opinion, had contempt of human passions reached so high a point.

'By what path,' he said to himself, 'has this man been able to attain to this state of supreme indifference?'

Still he did not address him, and the judge was about to retire, saying to D'Auterive:

'I count upon your kindness, M. D'Auterive!' when, from the height which Pastourel had just descended, a man was seen running in great haste towards them; he uttered a cry when he saw them, and made a sign that they should wait for him. This man was Pierre Couteau. What brought him there? what was his errand? We will inform the reader in due time.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

In one of the preceding chapters we left Jean Couteau escorting the Comtesse D'Auterive to her house, or rather to the house of the Marquis of Veroni, where she lodged together with her husband. On the other hand it will be remembered that when Bernard repaired to the Comte de Frias, he had secured the means of his escape. Lastly, the reader is aware, that after the departure of Bernard, D'Auterive and Galidou, Barati and the old baron had remained together. We will now inform him what had become of these different persons, while the events which we have narrated occurred at the convent.

When the Comtesse D'Auterive, still stupified by the tidings which she had just heard concerning her birth, reached the dwelling of Veroni with Jean Couteau, a domestic said to her:

'What has become of the marquis? There is some one here waiting for him with the utmost impatience.'

'Who?' said the comtesse, now alarmed at the slightest incident.

'Ha, *par dieu*!' cried the domestic, 'it is neither more nor less than Catharine, Jean Couteau's daughter-in-law.'

'And what brings her here?' asked the old hunter in a rough tone.

'She is waiting for the marquis,' said the domestic.

'What business has she with him?' rejoined Couteau with increasing anger.

'Your daughter-in-law!' said the comtesse, 'she is the daughter of a certain Gali, is she not, whose son, named Galidou, has disappeared from the country.'

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'And who, as they pretend,' said Couteau in a low voice, 'is no other than the Marquis of Veroni.'

'I am glad she is here,' said the comtesse in the same tone, 'perhaps she knows something.'

'About what?' rejoined Couteau.

Clemence did not at once reply; presently she said:

'I wish to see her, I wish to question her. I thank you, Jean; you can return.'

'Madam, I should prefer taking Catharine back to the house; this is not the place for her.'

'I must speak to her, I say. You can wait for her if you please.'

'I do not like this house well enough either to leave my daughter-in-law here or to wait for her.'

'Well, then,' replied the comtesse, quickly, 'let Pierre Couteau come for her, I should be very glad to speak with him also.'

'If that is the case, she can remain,' said Jean, 'since she will stay with you until her husband comes for her. Besides,' he added, between his teeth, 'it is his affair.'

Madame D'Auterive entered the house, and sent word to Catharine that she wished to speak with her. The peasant woman scanned the comtesse with an inquisitive scrutinizing glance, and although the fatigue of her walk may have disturbed her features, yet Catharine felt at once convinced that this was not the only cause of her agitation.

'What is your wish, madam?' she said.

'You are the daughter of Gali, are you not?'

'It is no news, madam,' replied Catharine.

'You are married to Pierre Couteau?'

'Ah! indeed!' said Catharine, 'that is so of course, since I am called Catharine Couteau.'

'Your husband was a private in the company of Comte D'Auterive about fifteen years ago.'

'The comte can assure you of it.'

'Catharine,' said the comtesse, who was beating the bush to start some hare at random, 'very strange things are happening.'

This stroke reached its aim, and Catharine exclaimed:

'Is the Marquis of Veroni to espouse Mademoiselle de la Roque?'

A woman could not be mistaken as to the meaning of this exclamation, which came thus spontaneously from a jealous heart. She gazed at Catharine with a confidential air, and said, sinking her voice:

'Galidou may call himself Marquis of Veroni as much as he will, he is not of a rank to obtain the daughter of the Baron de la Roque.'

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'Ah!' cried Catharine, in profound astonishment, 'do you know who he is?'

'Yes, Catharine, and to prove it, I will tell you what is passing.'

She now informed her of the arrest of Don Jose and Charlotte, and of the vengeance that the old baron had resolved to take against his daughter or against his wife.

Catharine listened quietly to this recital, and, at last, replied:

'Well, then, you are as much interested in this as I am, are you not, madam, for you are as unwilling that M. de Velay should espouse Mademoiselle Charlotte as I am that Galidou should espouse her.'

When women are led by no interest to hate each other, they are wonderfully frank as to their foibles, and Madam D'Auterive replied sadly:

'Oh, that is passed now! Let the Marquis de Valey marry whom he pleases. I have something else to think of.'

'What is it?'

'Do you know who placed Galidou in your father's hands?'

'Father Pastourel.'

'And has no one ever been to see him, during his absence?'

'Oh, yes, madam; a woman of Toulouse, named Vergnes, came very often on errands from Pastourel.'

'Vergnes!' repeated the Comtesse D'Auterive, starting, 'and do you know what has become of this woman?'

'She must be dead; for it is a long time since she has been here.'

'A very long time?' said Clemence.

'Why, it is sixteen or seventeen years,' replied Catharine. 'I remember it, as if it was yesterday, for it was she who told me that Galidou was not my brother, and that was the cause of my misfortune.'

'And since then, you have not heard of her?'

'Pierre Couteau, my husband, knows all about the matter, madam, for he told me—*ma foi*, what was it he told me? ah! I have forgotten.—But if I am not mistaken, I hear his voice in the court—he will inform you. Only, as I made him believe I was going to the ruins, say to him that you had sent for me, and that my errand to Pastourel's was only a pretext to get here.'

Pierre Couteau now entered, and Catharine, seeing from the air of vexation which was visible in his face, that he was but little pleased to find her in this house, hastened to say:

'Here is Madam D'Auterive, who has sent for me, thinking that I could give her some information respecting the woman Vergnes; you must know about her.'

'Ah!' said Pierre Couteau, 'the comtesse remembers, then that we met in her house, once.'

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'How!' cried Madam D'Auterive, 'we have met at this woman's! Never! never!'

Pierre mistook the emotion which caused the comtesse to repel this supposition so indignantly, and replied:

'Do not be angry, madam, do not be angry. I do not mean to say that you have ever frequented the den of this old hag, but still you have been there—and with me, with Pierre Couteau—on the famous day of your father's arrest; you must remember it—the famous day of the casket.'

'It is true,' said Madam D'Auterive, 'and it was to the house of this Vergnes that you led me? And was this woman in the secret of the intrigues which were plotted in her house?'

'Of those, and many others.'

'What others?'

'Ah, *ma foi!* I cannot tell you that, but some of them must have concerned you more nearly than you imagine.'

'What ones?'

'I will tell you what happened. It was some time after your wedding with Comte D'Auterive; I had just married Catharine also; well, one evening I met mother Vergnes, as she was coming from Toulouse, and as soon as she saw me, she cried:

'"Ah, *pardieu*, I am glad to meet you, Pierre Couteau; you must lead me to the house of the Baron de la Roque, your father's old master."

'"And what business," I said, "have you with the Baron de la Roque?"

'"Ah," she replied, "we are old acquaintances; you ought to suspect it, for you were in my house when he came there to meet with others concerning the affairs of the protestants."

'"Stay!" I said, "is that business still going on?"

'"Whether it is going on or not," replied Rosine, "it is nothing to me now; my time is up in this country; all the others have drawn themselves safely out of the business. But the master of all—you remember the old man who brought the casket—is about to leave the country with his son, and as I should be left without protection, I am going to vanish also, and follow my husband to Naples."

'"Well, and what have you to say, to the Baron de la Roque?"

'"I have a little packet to place in his hands."

'"It must be very important, since you have undertaken the journey yourself."

'"Ah, *ma foi!*" replied Rosine, "I would have gone twice the distance to place this safely in the baron's hands, if it but produces the result which I expected from it."

'"Madam,' continued Pierre Couteau, '"we walked along, talking and laughing, and, although I am by no means curious, I could not help asking myself what this secret

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could be between Mother Vergnes and the baron, and I said to her:

'"You are greatly interested in it, then?"

'"Oh," she replied, "if it is true that you love the comte, as you always boasted at Toulouse, it ought to interest you also, for it concerns him very closely."

'"Tell me, then!" I said at once.

'"Well then," she replied, "listen. If ever old Barati, Madam D'Auterive's father—for he is her father—wishes to annoy her, and consequently his son-in-law with her, the Baron de la Roque will have that in his hands which can make the old councillor shake in his shoes."

'"Bah!" I said to her, "and how so?"

'"Ah, Pierre," she replied, that is my secret and Pastourel's."

'"But why do you not place it in the hands of the comte himself?"

'"Because it concerns matters which it is unnecessary for him to know, unless father Barati makes mischief, and the comte is not a man likely to resist the desire of seeing its contents, if I should place it in his hands, and tell him that it concerned him."

'"Are you more sure, then, of the baron's discretion?"

'"He is under our control," replied Rosine; "he is well aware that we know too much about his affairs."

'In this way we reached the baron's house. Mother Vergnes went in, and I waited for her, but she passed the night there, and the next day she had gone, no one knew whither.'

'You did not see her again?'

'She knew too much, madam; the baron was not anxious to let her speak to any one.'

'And have you related this to my husband?' said Madam D'Auterive.

'*Ma foi*! madam, I have scarcely thought of it for these fourteen years, and if you had not asked me about this woman, I should not have thought of it now.'

Clemence now called to mind the words of Pastourel, concerning the inquest, which would prove that the councillor had adopted a suppositious child in order to obtain the property of the family of Lostanges, and she no longer doubted that the baron was the depository of this secret.

'Pierre Couteau,' she said, 'it is useless for you to speak of this affair to my husband, but you must conduct me at once to the baron's.'

'If you wish it, madam, I am at your service; but there is Catharine who will answer as well.'

'*Ma foi*!' said Catharine, 'I have run about enough today.'

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'Enough—to rest here, ha! and to wait for Galidou?' cried Pierre with a scowl.

Notwithstanding their presence of mind, the two women exchanged a glance, and Madam D'Auterive hastened to reply:

'Catharine has nothing to say to the Marquis of Verona, and I am sure that she will accompany us.'

'Accompany us?' said Pierre.

'Accompany me, if you will not go with us, although it is perhaps imprudent for two women to venture across the fields in the middle of the night.'

'Well, then, we will both go with you.'

In a few moments, Pierre Couteau and his wife, together with Madam D'Auterive, took the road which led to the mansion of the Baron de la Roque.

CHAPTER XL.

If the reader will calculate the time and the course of events, he will observe that Clemence returned from the ruins, escorted by Jean Couteau, while her husband, Bernard, and Galidou were retracing their steps to the baron's. The interview which she had just had with Catharine and Pierre, took place while her husband and his companions were at the mansion, so that they had already left it, when she resolved to repair thither.

It was during this interval that the following scene occurred:

'Well, then, baron!' said Barati, 'you hold your vengeance in your hands?'

'And you are still awaiting yours,' replied the baron.

'Mine cannot escape me.'

'It may be so, it may be so, Master Barati; but it may cost you so dear, that it will be vengeance no longer. I set no store by those victories for which one pays with his life, and I am not one of those who would toss his enemy from a window, at the risk of following him.'

'What do you mean by that, baron?'

'I know your plan, Master Barati; you purpose to have the restoration of the Prince of Puzzano revoked, and to compel him to prove that Galidou is not a suppositious child?'

'Do you think he can prove it;'

'You are a skilful advocate, Master Barati, but you are not the man to contend against old Pastourel. He was mocking you in the ruins, when he appeared to fear your accusation; he cares as little for it as he does for his old shoes.'

'And why?'

'I will tell you. Because there exists a regular certifi-

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cate of the birth of the said Galidou, whom he has recognized as his son.'

'We will attack the certificate.'

'It will be still better defended.'

And by whom?'

'By the Duke de Nevres in the first place, and then by me.'

'By you?'

'By me! I signed it.'

'When and how?' exclamed Barati, 'it is impossible! The first time I entered your castle—I remember it very well—you had not the slightest suspicion that Galidou was the prince's son, for you would have shut him up with an old wolf; and if I heard rightly certain words of Don Jose's, he promised to a certain man, named Jean Couteau, two hundred crowns in your name, if he would rid you of Pastourel.'

'You have an excellent memory, councillor, but you do not go far enough back. I knew the Prince of Puzzano at the time of his sister's marriage with the Duke de Nevres, and at the time when the contract was signed, and when you played so silly a part. It was nine months after, Master Barati, that he brought a new born infant to Mirepoix, and had it christened as his son, I being present as a witness with the Comte de Frias and the Duke de Nevres, his brother-in-law. And do you know what precautions he took to protect this child in his rights? He entailed all his wealth upon the said Duke de Nevres, but in the case only that he himself should be restored to his rights, and could thus possess it; but in order that the duke, of whose character he had formed a just estimate, should not profit unfairly by this entailment, he added a second condition, namely, that the child should live and be placed in possession of his property and his title. Now, you are too skilful, Master Barati, not to know that this precaution is common in entailments, and recognized in all the courts of law, and you are too well acquainted with the Duke de Nevres not to know that he will make every effort to establish Galidou in his rights.'

'You were aware of all this, and still would have cast the son of the Prince of Puzzano to an old wolf?'

'I knew all this, master; I even knew that the child could be recognized by a cross which had been marked upon his left side; but after having taken all these precautions, Giacomo carried him I know not whither. It was about a year after this, that Gali came to establish himself, with his wife and one child, at Lavelanet. How the devil would you have me think that this child was the prince's son? Giacomo did not make his appearance for many years, and I was far enough from suspecting twenty years after that the shepherd Pastourel was the prince himself.'

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'But where is this certificate of birth?' said Barati.

'I will tell you presently, Master Barati, when you have promised me a little favour.'

'And what favour?'

'That in the trial which is soon to be commenced, you will testify, that, on the day when I imprisoned you in the dungeon, the baroness came to seek you there, and acknowledged her guilt, demanding your aid to enable her to escape my vengeance.'

'It is perjury that you require of me, baron.'

'What is that you require of me, when you wish me to tell you where this certificate of birth is to be found?'

'I ask a simple truth.'

'Which would soon be nothing more than a lie, for if you knew where this certificate was, you would probably find means to remove it.'

'Well then,' said Barati, 'give me your word of honour that you will tell me where this certificate is deposited, and I will testify what you wish.'

'It is not words in the air that I ask of you, Master Barati, but a testimony written and certified by your own hand.'

'I am ready to draw it up, but you will tell me where this certificate is to be found?'

'I have promised.'

'Well, then, dictate, baron. I will write.'

'Very well,' said the baron, 'your evidence will be of great weight, for you pass for an honest man.'

Notwithstanding the tone of insolence in which these words were spoken, Barati did not reply; he began to write, at the baron's dictation, the declaration which he had required of him.

He had scarcely finished when a domestic brought word that the Comtesse D'Auterive wished to speak with her father.

'Why not let her enter here,' said the baron, addressing Barati: 'She must have some news for us, by her coming in the middle of the night. Besides,' added the baron, 'I have a slight favour to ask of her.'

'As you please, baron,' said the old councillor.

When the comtesse entered, she was greatly surprised to find herself in the baron's presence, and by a sign gave her father to understand that she wished to speak with him, but the latter said at once:

'Do not advance to salute your uncle, my daughter.'

'Ay, ay, in truth,' said the baron, 'and much more certainly my niece, than she is your daughter.'

The comtesse gazed upon her father, who said to her:

'He knows all.'

'Yes, Madam D'Auterive, but I am a good fellow at heart,

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and if you will be somewhat obliging towards me, you shall not repent of it.'

'What can I do for you, sir?' said Clemence.

'Will you read to me that scrap of paper which your father has just written.'

Madam D'Auterive read it, and the baron then said:

'That is right; you have acted like an honest man, Master Barati; pardon my suspicions, but when one is blind, it is not easy to know what has been written.'

This remark inspired the comtesse with a sudden thought.

'Give me the paper, my niece,' said the baron.

The comtesse made a sign to her father, and at the same moment placed a different paper in the hands of the baron, who took it and folded it, saying to Clemence:

'And now, my niece, take a taper, and follow me. We have no need of you, Master Barati. I wish to surprise her.'

They traversed various apartments, and stopped at last in a chamber, in which stood a high chest of drawers, covered and rivetted with iron; he opened it, and said to the comtesse:

'Do you not see upon the second shelf, to the right, a small sealed packet?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Take it, and read the superscription.'

She read:

'To be placed in the hands of the Comtesse D'Auterive.'

'That is it; conceal this packet, my niece, and henceforth laugh at the threats of Pastourel.'

'*Mon dieu*! cried the comtesse, 'it is the packet that was placed in your hands by Rosine.'

'You knew of it?'

'I did.'

'You know then that it contains the affidavit that Giacomo compelled your mother to sign, attesting that you are Vergnes' daughter and hers, and not the daughter of Barati?'

'I know it.'

'Well then, my niece, say nothing of the matter to your father. He must not think that he is safe against the inquest which would destroy him as well as you.'

'Why so?'

'You will see; come!'

They returned to the apartment where they had left Barati, and the latter said to the baron:

'And now you will tell me where this certificate is deposited?'

'*Ma foi*!' replied the baron, in a tone of mockery, 'I have been delighted with my niece, and I have reflected upon what passed at the ruins. If you undertake anything against Galidon, Pastourel will requite you by disclosing the secret of Clemence's birth; that would destroy this good comtesse, and

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it would dishonour my nephew. I think that it would be more prudent to tell you nothing, for your own sake, for you would only lose by it.'

'These were not our terms,' replied the councillor, 'and you have given me your word of honour to tell me where the certificate of Galidou's birth is deposited.'

'It is true! it is true!' said the baron, in a tone of mockery, 'and I always keep my word, but I now remember that I promised the Prince of Puzzano to say nothing about it until you were dead. I will keep my first promise, but at the same time I swear to you that as soon as you are buried, I will come to your grave and tell you where this certificate is to be found.'

'After what I have just done for you, baron, your conduct is infamous.'

'What conduct is infamous towards the man who has written and signed a falsehood?'

'I hope that that which I have written and signed may serve you in your plans of vengeance,' replied Barati with a sneer.

'What is that?' cried M. de la Roque, quickly, 'has he followed us? has he robbed me of that paper?'

'I have given you another, a different paper,' said Clemence.

'Theft! murder! help!' roared the baron, 'this man and woman have robbed me, pillaged me! seize them!—Murder!' he cried, darting upon Barati, and grasping him by the throat.

At these frightful cries, the domestics rushed in on all sides, and among them Don Jose, who having heard of Bernard's departure for the convent, did not doubt but that he would bring Charlotte back with him, and was waiting near the house for her return. Pierre Couteau and Catharine entered also.

'Free me from this furious madman!' cried Barati, struggling beneath the baron's grasp.

'Seize him! seize him!' cried M. de la Roque, in an ungovernable rage, 'he is a robber! he has robbed his daughter!'

Don Jose, hurried beyond the bounds of prudence, at the sight of these old men struggling in desperate conflict, raised his voice, and said:

'Seize your master! he will slay this man!'

At the sound of this voice, the baron paused, but without loosing his hold of Barati, whom he held by his neckcloth, beneath which he had wound his hand.

'Is that Don Jose de Frias?' he cried.

'It is, Baron de la Roque.'

'And you all conspire then to deceive me? Well then! this man shall pay me first.'

With herculean strength, he dragged Barati to the table,

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and took from it a long, sharp knife. Frias rushed upon the baron, crying:

'Hold! hold!'

'Ah!' said the baron, uttering a savage cry, 'I have caught thee, Don Jose!'

And at once, turning from Barati, he plunged the knife into Don Jose's heart, and stretched him dead at his feet. But in the midst of the tumult, all struggling together, Barati had succeeded in cocking one of the pistols which he had carried with him to the ruins, and at the moment when the baron turned from him to strike Don Jose, he discharged it; the ball entered his loins, and scarcely had Frias fallen, when the baron dropped dead at his side.

All rushed upon Barati, seized him, and he was confined by the baron's domestics in a chamber on the ground floor.

During the first few hours after these events, the castle was a scene of confusion. The comtesse durst not, and could not give orders in her uncle's house, and against her father; and at break of day Catharine despatched her husband to the convent of Saint Benoit, to bring the criminal judge, and those who might be with him.

The tidings brought by Pierre Couteau was of a nature to effect a total change in the hostile views of Comte D'Auterive. Bernard at once placed him at his ease.

'This is a serious affair, comte,' he said; and if you wish time to arrange it, I will hold myself in readiness for any day that you may find convenient.'

'I will do the same,' said Galidou.

'I accept your proposal, M. de Velay,' said the comte. 'As for you, Marquis of Veroni, I beg you to forget an expression for which my anger offers some excuse. I remember, I am your guest.'

Galidou bowed, and D'Auterive turned to Pierre Couteau, who was saying to the judge:

'But where are you going?'

'Home.'

'Have you not heard me? I tell you that there have been two murders committed.'

'Two murders!' cried the judge, 'two murders! There have been two murders committed?'

He repeated these words three or four times in succession, and with increasing irritability, and then exclaimed, with a gesture of anger:

'*Sacredie*, is it written then that they shall hunt and eat the pasty without me?'

Then turning to his colleagues, he said:

'To our duty, then, gentlemen—and since they force me to it, wo to those who fall into my hands!'

With these words, he pursued his way with a resolute step;

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Pastourel approached him, accosted him, and walked onward at his side, apparently endeavouring to soothe him. In the meanwhile, D'Auterive called to Pierre Couteau, and inquired concerning the slightest particulars of the catastrophe.

'So then,' he said, 'after he had questioned him, the comtesse returned to the baron's, after you told her that story respecting Rosine; and did you learn nothing of what passed between them?'

'I have told you, sir; when we rushed in, the baron was crying, "Theft! robbery!" and the rest passed like lightning.'

'Well!' said the comte, 'you need not speak either of Rosine, or of the packet.'

'*Ma foi*, I promise to be silent,' said Pierre, 'but Catharine was present; and if she takes it into her head to prate, nobody in the world can stop her.'

'*Diable*,' cried D'Auterive, 'it would be terrible!' Then, after reflecting a moment, he added, 'Well, I will silence her!'

'By what means?' said Couteau.

'Oh!' replied the comte, 'do not concern yourself about that; that is my affair.'

Pierre Couteau did not appear pleased to find that M. D'Auterive possessed a power over his wife, which he was unable to exert, and he racked his brains to discover the means, by which Catharine could be prevented from prating. In his opinion, it must be something dreadful—some secret of this wife's, and the suspicions which he harboured against her returned with redoubled force.

By this time, Bernard and Galidou had reached a spot where the road divided.

'Are you not going to the baron's?' said Bernard to Galidou.

'I have nothing to do there,' replied the latter, 'and I do not care to be mingled up in these murders; besides, I suppose I shall find some one at home who will inform me of all that has passed.'

He saluted Bernard, and hurrying onward, overtook Pastourel and the judge, and he said to his father:

'I wish to speak a word with you, sir.'

'It is entirely useless,' replied Pastourel.

'But it seems to me, father,' said Galidou, in a more humble tone, 'that Barati's threats are of such a nature, that we should take precautions against them.'

'These precautions have been taken, long since,' said Pastourel. 'I have just explained to the judge, the manner in which they were taken, and the place where the documents will be found which will secure your rights.'

'Yes, Marquis of Veroni,' said the judge, bowing with an

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air which assured Galidou that the magistrate was convinced of the validity of the title by which he addressed him, 'these documents will be placed in your hands by me, whom monseigneur has been so kind as to entrust with the charge of this affair.'

'But Barati's accusation?' rejoined Galidou.

'It is that of a madman,' said Pastourel. 'Is it not true, Comte D'Auterive,' said the prince, raising his voice, 'that Master Barati has for some time been labouring under mental derangement?'

'Yes, yes, in truth,' said the comte, who divined the way thus opened by the prince to make the best of the affair, 'and since yesterday we have been trying to contrive some means to prevent the misfortunes which might result from his madness. Alas! we thought of it too late, and hence this sad catastrophe.'

'You declare, then,' said the judge, 'that M. Barati is mad, actually mad?'

'The fact is undoubted.'

'In that case,' said the judge, 'I need only arrest him, and I do not see why I should not defer the examination to some future day, by declaring that he is not in a condition to answer.'

'It will be perfectly right,' replied Pastourel.

'Very well! very well!' said the judge, quickening his pace, 'all can be arranged admirably. But let us despatch, for I must return to Foix this evening, if I would reach Mas in time to-morrow.'

'And they will not eat the pasty without you?'

'*Ma foi*!' replied the judge, with a wise air, 'you may jest as much as you please, monseigneur, but the pasty is composed of ducks' livers with truffles.'

Pastourel's admiration at this answer under circumstances so serious, prevented him from replying. Besides it suited his projects that the judge should admit Barati's madness without an examination; he did not add another word but departed in the direction of the ruins. Bernard, unwilling to remain alone with D'Auterive, resolved to follow Galidou, and the comte continued his way with Pierre Couteau, the judge and his colleagues. The reached the mansion of the Baron de la Roque at so late an hour, that the judge had but little time to draw up his minutes. The comtesse, ignorant that her husband was informed of her *liaison* with Bernard, related all that had passed with the most unsuspecting confidence.

D'Auterive found no difficulty in persuading her to testify that her father's reason had for a long time been deranged, and she gave evidence to that effect before the judge. D'Auterive confirmed her statement, but when they sought for witnesses to prove the manner in which the two maniacs had

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been committed, Catharine and Pierre Couteau were not to be found. The comtesse declared that Catharine had left the house as soon as her husband had set out for the mountain, and several of the domestics said that Pierre Couteau, having asked for his wife upon his return, and not having found her, exclaimed, 'Oh! I know where she must be, the jade!' and then at once hurried from the house, taking the road towards the abode of the Marquis of Veroni.

We will leave the judge to draw up and complete his minutes at his leisure; we will accompany neither Pierre Couteau nor Galidou, but will follow Jean Couteau on his way to the ruins on the ensuing morning. The old hunter walked onward with drooping head, as if sunk in deep affliction. Having crossed the remains of the drawbridge, he went directly to the lower hall which Pastourel occupied, and found it deserted; he called aloud, but no one answered; he whistled, in hopes that Greyfoot would make his appearance and lead him to his master, but it was in vain.

He then slowly left the ruins, but as the fatigue which he had undergone, together with the grief which seemed to overpower him had exhausted his strength, he sat down upon a stone at some distance from the bridge.

Scarcely had he taken his seat when the earth seemed to tremble beneath his feet: everything around him shook and tottered, and a violent explosion was heard; the ruins of the castle, some towers of which had survived the conflagration, seemed to rock for a moment on their base, and then fell with a fearful din, while a vast sheet of fire mounted aloft, hurling far and wide large masses of stone, some of which dropped at the feet of the old huntsman.

Jean Couteau, greatly terrified, started up and took to flight, convinced that it was the devil who had blown up the castle of La Roque, and that Pastourel was buried beneath its ruins, but on turning to cast a last glance at the frightful spectacle, he beheld the sorcerer himself crossing the rubbish at a quick step, and coming towards him.

Jean was on the point of resuming his flight, but he stopped at the sound of Pastourel's voice, as he called to him. He waited, and Giacomo approaching him, said:

'God be praised for having saved you, Jean! Had you entered the castle?'

'Yes, and I called after you, but to no purpose.'

'I had betaken myself to a safe place,' replied Pastourel, 'while I accomplished the last act of justice which remains to me on earth.'

'Whom have you buried beneath the ruins?'

'No one; but I have destroyed the immense wealth which I had accumulated during many years, and which was concealed in the caverns of this mountain. I am unwilling that

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it should fall into the hands of a son who has proved himself unworthy of it. Stay, Jean, here is a letter which will inform him that I have deprived him of those riches which have rendered him so proud and so vain.'

Pastourel reached the letter to Couteau, who refused it, and turned aside his head.

'Will you render me this service, Jean?'

'He to whom the letter is addressed,' replied the old hunter, 'can no longer read it.'

'What mean you?'

'I knew it would be so, Pastourel,' replied Jean. 'I have often told Catharine that some misfortune would come of it.'

'Well, then?'

'Well, then, Pastourel, I came to tell you about it, for there is no one but you who can save him.'

'Who?'

'Pierre, my son.'

'What has he done?'

'Yesterday he missed Catharine at the Baron de la Roque's, and suspecting where she was, he went to look for her. Catharine had supposed that the affair of the two murders would detain him all night at the castle. Pierre entered the house of the Marquis of Veroni, forced open the door, made his way into the chamber, where he found him with Catharine, and without thinking of anything but the injury which had been done him, he struck—'

'His wife?'

'No! the marquis, the *fillou*.'

'Has he killed him?'

'Killed him!' repeated Jean Couteau.

'And you have come to ask me to save him? me! me!'

'Hearken, Pastourel,' replied Jean, 'he was in the right; he had honour and courage; he is not like the Comte D'Auterive who had made up matters with the Marquis De Velay.'

'He has forgiven the comtesse, then?' said Pastourel.

'The comtesse departed this morning for the convent of Saint Benoit.'

'She also?' said Pastourel, 'the wife and the mistress both expiating their faults beneath the same roof. There is then a divine justice!'

'Yes,' said Jean, 'and if you believe in it, you will save Pierre.'

'But where is he at present?'

'Shut up in the same prison with the madman.'

'What madman?'

'The old councillor. His daughter has testified that he is deranged, his son-in-law has done the same, and they have put chains upon his feet and hands, as they have upon poor Pierre's likewise.'

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'Ah!' said Pastourel, 'they have well profited by the counsel I gave them. Come, Jean, come! if I can yet do anything in this world, I will do it, I will do it for you; you, the only honest man that I have found in this country. Come!'

Pastourel and Jean now walked together towards the mansion of La Roque. They found the associate judge still there, to whom the judges had entrusted the keeping of the two prisoners.

These had heard the judge call Pastourel 'monseigneur,' and they readily allowed him admission into the chamber in which Pierre Couteau and Barati were confined.

As he entered, the latter shook his chains, and cried:

'Ah! Giacomo! justice has been done; and you see by what hands it has been accomplished. You have come to put the murderer to the rack, and to hand him over to the headsman. Go, go, that will not bring your son!'

Pastourel did not reply.

'Pierre Couteau,' he said, 'take my pilgrim's robe, conceal your face as you go out, and hasten to join your father, who is waiting for you.'

'What! is it you who save me?' said Pierre.

'Begone! and do not question me,' said Pastourel. 'I must remain alone with this man.'

Pastourel removed Couteau's chains, and gave him his pilgrim's robe.

The associate judges who knew that the Marquis of Veroni was Pastourel's son, were far from imagining that the father would aid in the escape of the murderer. They suffered Pierre to pass therefore unquestioned, and Barati and the Prince of Puzzano were left alone.

Barati had not spoken from the moment when he saw Pastourel assisting Pierre to make his escape. A strange terror had seized him. In the contests which he had sustained against his man, he had so often seen events turn to the advantage of his foe, that he imagined that Pastourel would not have visited his prison, except to inflict some new torture upon him. He did not speak until they were alone, when he said:

'Well Giacomo, and what have you yet to say to me?'

'You are avenged, Barati—Armande is dead, and this man has slain her son and mine."

'And you—are not you avenged, Giacomo? They are going to condemn me to end my days in a madhouse?'

'Barati, do you regret nothing that you have done?'

Barati was silent.

'These misfortunes, these calamities, which follow each other with such fearful rapidity, do they not declare to you, that the time for repentance has arrived?'

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Barati gazed steadfastly at Pastourel, who, with his head buried in his hands, seemed sunk in the deepest dejection; then, after a moment's silence, he replied:

'You can repent—God will give you time—but I, how can I?'

'You can, if you are sincere,' said Pastourel. 'I shall retire into the convent of La Trappe.'

'Ah! I should be too happy, could I but follow you thither. for I confess I am terrified at the confinement with which I am threatened; my reason, I am convinced, will give way, and in a few months the falsehood of Comte D'Auterive will be a truth.'

'Well, then,' said Pastourel, 'may God enlighten you, and enable you to become reconciled to him. You shall be freed!'

'Freed,!' cried Barati.

'I will remove your chains, as I have removed Pierre's, and we can easily elude the vigilance of our keepers, who, thinking that their prisoners are chained, will not watch very carefully at the door. Besides, this chamber must have another way of egress.'

'Oh, thanks!' said Barati, as Pastourel with a cutlass opened the padlock which fastened his chains, 'thanks, Giacomo! God will recompense thy generosity in the next world ,and thus I requite it in this!'

With these words, he snatched the cutlass from the hands of Pastourel, plunged it in his breast, and laid him dead at his feet.

An hour afterwards, when the judges entered the chamber, Barati was seated upon the corpse of his enemy, laughing, and rocking to and fro, muttering incoherent and unmeaning words. His wandering eye, his bristly hair, the contraction of the features, gave him an aspect truly terrible. Barati was mad! His reason had yielded to the savage joy which his vengeance had brought to him. Each of these two men had received his punishment.

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